



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

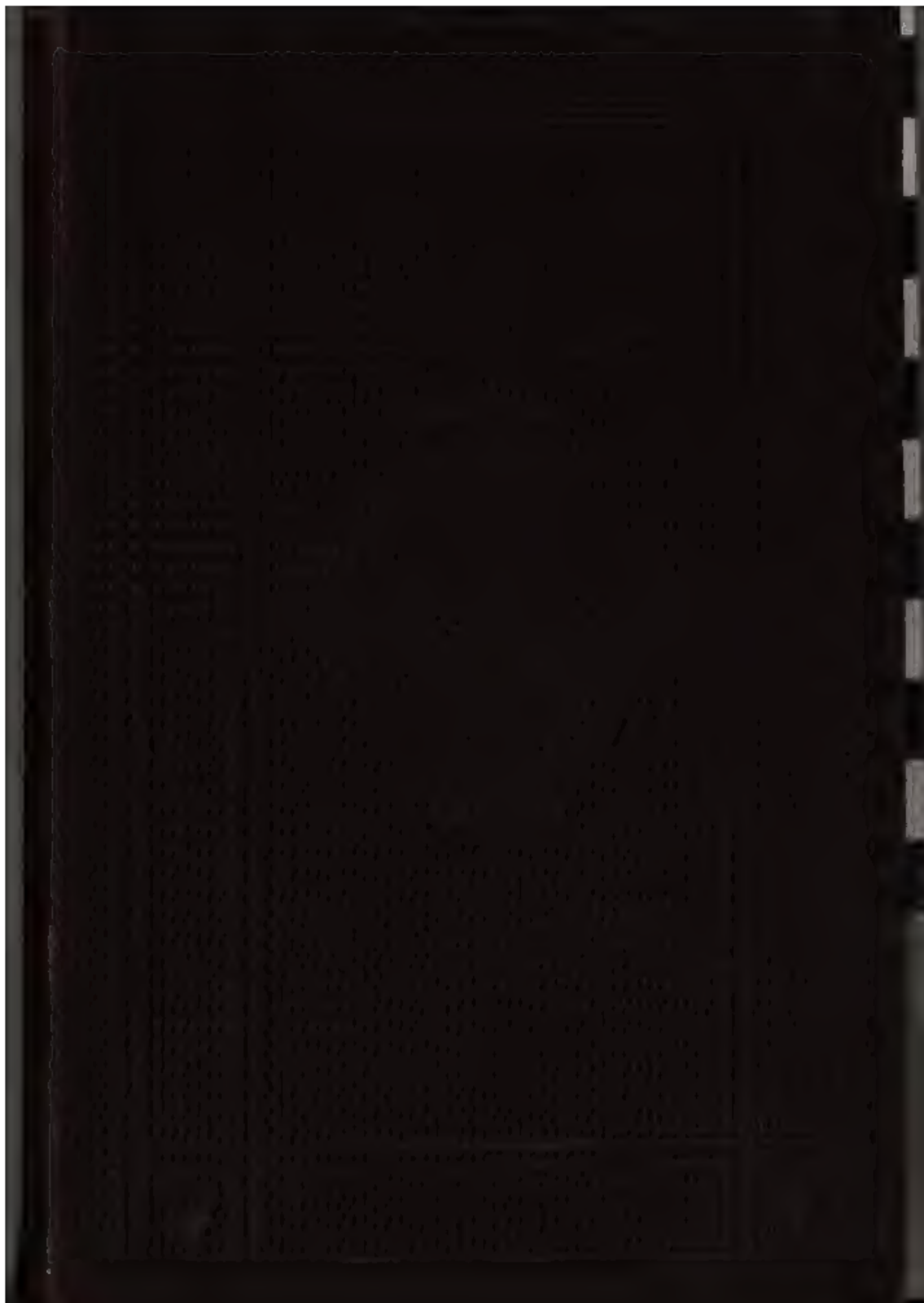
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





THE CHESHIRE PILGRIMS.

THE CHESHIRE PILGRIMS.

THE
CHESHIRE PILGRIMS;

OR,
SKETCHES OF CRUSADING LIFE

IN THE
Thirteenth Century.

BY FRANCES M. WILBRAHAM,

Authoress of "FOR AND AGAINST," &c., &c.

LONDON :
JOHN MORGAN, 10, PATERNOSTER ROW ;
CHESTER : HUGH ROBERTS, EASTGATE ROW.
1862.

250 . g . 48

- Italy and Sicily, touching at Ostia, Palermo, and Syracuse; the latter had sailed down the Adriatic, and it was but a few hours before that they had come in sight of one another. There could scarcely be less than between fifty and sixty vessels in all, lying motionless on the scarce-heaving sea.

Whither was this armament bound? you will ask. Who were its leaders, and what were the motives that induced them to leave their homes, and brave the dangers of the sea, at a time when navigation was little understood? In order to reply meetly to these questions, we must glance for a moment at the history of that period.

About the beginning of the thirteenth century, the fifth crusade had been preached by Pope Innocent III. and his emissaries through the length and breadth of Europe. At his death, Honorius III., his successor, took up the cause with equal warmth, but with little success at first. England and her fierce barons were engaged in a struggle for power with their worthless monarch, John. Philip Augustus of France was taken up with ambitious schemes for increasing his own power at the expense of England and Germany. The petty states of Italy were all at war with one another. Germany was in a state of anarchy, the imperial throne being occupied by a minor, Frederic II., and the regency contended for by factious nobles. No wonder, therefore, that for a time Honorius appealed in vain to Christendom for help against the infidels.

He persevered, however, in his attempt, promising eternal salvation even to the most flagrant sinners, who should venture life and lands in the cause. His perseverance was crowned with success, for besides the love of glory and of gain, there lay deep in most hearts a passionate love and veneration for the holy sites of Palestine and the East, and a proportionate hatred towards the infidels, who had recently made themselves masters of Jerusalem. Outward circumstances became by degrees more favourable to the Pope's design. The Emperor Frederic was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1215, and in order to secure the favour of Honorius, added to his coronation oaths a vow that he would himself lead a crusading army to the East. In 1217, John of England made peace with his subjects and with France. Jean de Brienne, titular King of Jerusalem, a Frenchman by birth, persuaded Philip Augustus that it lay with his interest to lend him speedy succours. Thus the crusading spirit had scope to spring up, and produced such marvellous effects as almost stagger belief. Numberless lords and knights offered themselves for the 'holy war;' while matrons of high degree and tender maidens, eagerly volunteered to accompany their husbands and fathers to the East.

Malek Adel, brother of the famous Saladin, was at that time Sultan of Syria and Egypt. He was a prince of great prudence and courage, and therefore, a very formidable enemy to the Christians. After

much consultation as to the most effectual way of breaking his power, it was resolved to invade Egypt. Accordingly, in April 1217, a large army, commanded by the King of Jerusalem, and Leopold Duke of Austria, set sail from Acre, and landing at Damietta on the Nile, laid siege to that important city. Many weary months had passed, much blood and treasure had been expended on both sides, and many acts of desperate valour performed ; still Damietta held out, and Malek Adel, from his capital of Cairo, contrived to supply her garrison with arms and provisions. The eyes of Europe, nay, of the civilized world, were fixed on this great struggle, and fresh relays of crusaders poured in day by day to replace their brethren, decimated by war, fever, and pestilence.

Damietta, then, was the destination of the fleet we have already spoken of. Genoa, and more especially Venice, whose crafty and grasping policy was already proverbial, gladly hired out their vessels at exorbitant prices, for the transport of crusaders. The pennon of the Count of La Marche hung from one Genoese galley ; the Count of Nevers and his retinue occupied another. Their archers were placed in smaller ships, two of which usually rode side by side, flanked by large vessels, closely packed with heavily-armed warriors. These ships carried also great store of bolts for cross-bows, stones, and bars of forged iron. They were upwards of a hundred feet long, and scarcely twenty feet broad, furnished

with two masts, and large lateen sails. Near the foremast of several were erected light towers, from which missiles might be hurled at an enemy. National flags were then unknown ; but the vessels were bright with banners, banderoles, and guidons ; no standard hung in richer folds than that of Randle, Earl of Chester, who, with a thousand followers, was hastening to the 'holy war.' It displayed, on an azure field, three golden sheaves, embroidered by the hand of his first wife, Constance of Brittany, mother of the ill-fated Prince Arthur.* The Earl of Arundel, with a large body of retainers, was also of the expedition, and many warriors of lesser note had ranged themselves under the banners of these great lords. Perhaps the most remarkable feature in this fleet was a French galley from Marseilles, strongly built, and furnished with twenty-five banks of oars ; each oar was managed by six slaves, who were chained to it, and who wore eastern dresses, and silver collars round their throats. A small knot of armed men were visible on this vessel ; but its chief occupants were priests, numbers of whom were grouped round their diocesan, the Archbishop of Bourdeaux. This prelate, and several of his suffragans, were sent by Pope

* This marriage proved a very unhappy one, and was dissolved in 1200. Earl Randle subsequently married Clémence, widow of Alan de Dinan, who survived him. He had no children by either of his wives. To his divorce of Constance may be attributed his unpopularity with the Bretons.

Honorius to Damietta, ostensibly to encourage the flagging spirits of the Christians, but in truth, to act as spies and checks on their proceedings; they were, therefore, regarded with suspicion and ill-concealed dislike by the crusading lords. A canopy of cloth of gold was erected on board the priestly vessel, and under it was the 'consecrated wafer,' generally hidden by curtains, but from time to time displayed to the gaze of the whole fleet. It was looked upon with awe by the wildest and worst among those rough sailors; scarcely one of them but would have died rather than see that canopy fall into the hands of the infidels, yet (strange inconsistency of the human heart!) these very men feared not to 'crucify afresh' Him Whose Divine Presence it shadowed forth, by deeds of lawless violence and cruelty.

The fleet lay motionless on the waters, like a flock of sea-birds cowering together after a weary flight. A hum of voices and of song rose from it. Small boats were scudding to and fro, bearing messengers or visitors from one vessel to another. They were lighted by the lanterns which each ship hung out, and also by the moon, which rose like a torch above the sea. Its round orb looked as large and fiery as that of the setting sun, for it was magnified by the hot and vaporous atmosphere of the night.

A little bark glided away from under the shadow of Earl Randle's ship, and was swiftly rowed to the *side of a large Venetian galleasse*. Here a bevy of

English ladies, who had been waiting many weeks at Venice for a convoy to the Levant, were eagerly looking out for their lords, long detained by the troublous state of England under her boy-king, Henry III. Great rejoicing and excitement had prevailed amongst them ever since noon, when the squadron from Genoa had first come in sight. The Countess of Chester, a lively middle-aged Frenchwoman, was foremost in demonstrations of joy. She sat near the side of the vessel, watching for her husband's arrival. A 'cyclade,' or upper-robe, of Aleppo silk, was lightly thrown over her shoulders; she wore the wimple, gorget, and hood, peculiar to elderly ladies of that day, and which became well her ample figure, and pleasant matronly features. Her feet were encased in silken boots, which fitted the tiny ancles closely, and were richly embroidered round the top. Her maidens stood in a cluster behind her, all eager and smiling, save one.

'They come! they come?' exclaimed the countess, as the skiff glided in sight. 'Aveline, my child, bid the minstrels draw nigh; let my good lord find a fitting welcome amongst us. Where is Sir Tholomieu, our jester? Let him sharpen his wits, and make ready his keenest quips, for my lord loves such mirthful greeting.'

Two figures were now plainly distinguishable in the boat, besides those of the rowers. The foremost of the two, Earl Randle himself, was of light active make, considerably *below the middle stature*; he

wore a quilted shirt, and over that a tunic of interwoven iron rings, set edgewise, descending below the knee. On his head was a 'cap of mail,' composed like his body armour of metal rings. His face was exposed to view, but was remarkable neither for beauty of feature, nor loftiness of expression. An air of careless, fearless good humour characterized it, though perhaps a close observer might have detected lines indicative of unusual firmness about the mouth. It was shaded by a small moustache, grizzled, like his eyebrows and hair. His features, naturally fair, were tanned, and scorched to a deep brown. His gestures were quick and expressive, his voice loud and cheery. He now waved his hand repeatedly toward the galeasse, and addressing the knight who accompanied him, a tall and personable man of fifty or thereabouts, seemed in the act of pointing out to him an individual in the fair group surrounding the countess.

She observed the gesture, and turning to one of her maidens, said,

'Ah! Rosamond, *m'amie*, there is joy for thee also; see thy brave father comes with the lord he serves so well. What praise, what reward can we bestow on good Sir Richard Fytton, for the care he hath of Count Randle? Not in tented field only, but in secret council and hall of justice, he is his trusty right hand. Come forward, maiden, and let our gratitude to him be read by all in the loving care *we have had of thee.*'

Rosamond obeyed, but with drooping head and eyes cast down.

‘Your Grace forgets,’ she said, in a low voice, ‘that we Fyttons owe all, save honour, to Count Randle’s renowned father ; ’twas from him my grand-sire had his golden spurs, his manors of Fulshaw and Fallingbrome, his broad acres of chase and forest. Our loyal service and prayers are, therefore of right, Earl Randle’s—and your’s also, gracious lady.

She stopped, for some thought or sudden recollection choked her utterance. The countess’s keen lively glance rested on her for a moment, but seeing tears ready to drop from the dark blue eyes, she changed the subject, and said mirthfully,

‘I have one cause of quarrel against Sir Richard, for that he doth by the head and shoulders overtop his lord ; truly my husband has not waxed taller since we parted in Brittany ! Ah ! my maidens, beware of youthful dreams : take ensample by me, whose girlish fancy ever framed to itself a lord of regal port and bearing, and lo, my Randle’s stature scarcely reaches mine !’

‘Ay, marry,’ observed Tholomieu, the jester, who was somewhat of a courtier, ‘my brother Ranulf’s big soul lacks elbow-room in that small body of his, yet has he taught the foes of England to know his strength ! What said the Count of Perche, two years ago, when he met our earl on the battle-field of Lincoln ? “Have we waited all this while,” cried .

he, "for such a little one, such a dwarf?" And Count Randle made answer, "Now, by our Lady, whose church-spire I see, I swear ere to-morrow's sun set, I will seem to thee stronger, and greater, and taller, than yonder steeple!"'

'Well remembered, fool,' said the countess, complacently; 'truly that vow was well redeemed, when my husband sallied forth from Lincoln gate at dawn, and slew the Count of Perche with his own hand! Then fled the rebels on every side, and my husband fetched our young and gracious king from the cattle-shed, where he lay hid, and setting him on the altar of Lincoln Cathedral, proclaimed him King of England!'

The Earl of Chester's boat now reached the galèasse, and he and his companion sprang on board, greeted by a burst of music, 'harp, psaltery, and songe,' from the minstrels. Then Syr Tholomieu, who acted as master of the ceremonies, led forward a troubadour, who, after short prelude, sang thus:

'Many speak of men, that romances read,
Of Bevis, Guy, and Gawayne,
Of King Richard and Owayne,
Of Kevelioc, Horne, and of Wade,
In romances that of them be made;
But the worthiest wight in weed
That ever bestrode any steed,
Since the world was made so farre,
Is Count Randle in each warre.'

The four last lines were taken up and sung in chorus by all the musicians present. Earl Randle

then signed to a squire who followed him, and taking from his hand a bag of silver coins, flung them among the performers. Something of a scramble ensued ; meanwhile the countess, satisfied with the effect of her little *coup de théâtre*, threw herself into her husband's arms, and expressed her joy at his safe return in a torrent of Norman-French exclamations. He replied by first kissing her hand, then her cheek, then—still retaining the hand in his—he led her through the throng of eager friends, greeting and being greeted by each in rude but kindly fashion.

Sir Richard Fytton's meeting with his only daughter was full of deep though repressed tenderness. He had (to borrow the words we still read on an old Fytton monument) 'buried the wife of his youth' after but a few years of blessed companionship ; from that time he had carefully gathered up the fragments of leisure left to him by a busy public life, and devoted them to the education of his children. Having been brought up to the bar, he possessed a considerable share of clerkly knowledge, and could teach his little Rosamond—no unapt pupil—the mysteries of reading and writing. At eleven years old she knew most of the Latin Psalter by heart, and could recite the legends of St. Alban, and of the Croyland Martyrs, besides many snatches of troubadour song and story. She was active and strong, and used to accompany her father and brothers in their *hunting and hawking expeditions*,

in Macclesfield Forest, or by the banks of the murmuring Bolyn.

But this desultory training might have left her heart untutored and wild, had not Providence raised up for her a friend whose gentle wisdom taught her to turn its impulses to good account. Dame Marye, widow of Maurice de Boteler, Lord of Wem, had been the early friend of Rosamond's parents, and Rosamond herself had from her girlhood been promised in marriage to Gawyne, her only son. It was, therefore, natural that the maiden should be much with her future mother-in-law ; and her bright but teachable spirit learnt to lean on Dame Marye for counsel and support. Gawyne loved his mother passionately ; she, for his dear sake and Rosamond's, put by the memories of former sorrows, and so the three dwelt happily together for many a month in Dame Marye's moated manor-house, not far from Oswestry.

Gawyne had reached the age of twenty-one and Rosamond was nearly seventeen, when the former was summoned to join Earl Randle in driving back the French, who had invaded Poitou. He gladly obeyed the mandate, and fought 'like a gentyl knight, and a fearless,' by the side of Sir Richard Fytton. When the approach of a severe winter suspended hostilities for a while, the two warriors returned to Brittany, where the Countess Clémence was holding her court. Rosamond was there, a proud and happy bride elect. The countess, who to

say truth, looked upon a wedding chiefly as a fit occasion for pageantry and feasting, urged Sir Richard to see the young pair united without further delay. He, for reasons of his own, consented. A day was fixed, and 'all went merry as a marriage bell.'

In one short night, however, a change, sudden, disastrous, and complete, came o'er the spirit of their dream. Gawyne de Boteler hastened back to England, in order to escort his mother to Brittany. On reaching the town of Oswestry, he found it reduced to ashes by King John himself, who was waging war with his rebellious barons in Shropshire.* The country round had been ravaged, the villages destroyed, the harmless inhabitants turned out of house and home, by order of this cruel and dastardly king. Gawyne found his beloved manor-house a smoking ruin. His mother, where was she? Some peasants told him, weeping and wringing their hands, how their dear lady had been barbarously driven forth at midnight by one Mauvoisin, a minion of King John's and deadly foe of the De Botelers. Wild with grief and rage, Gawyne tracked her to a lowly cell not far off, where lingered a few Benedictine nuns. Alas! the passing bell told him, as he crossed the threshold, that Dame Marye had even now died. Then fierce despair, and a thirst for vengeance, sprang up in his soul, and after printing one kiss on his mother's brow, he mounted his

* Oswestry, then called Blondeville, or Whiteminster, was burnt in 1216.

charger and rode straight to Shrewsbury. There lay the royal army, feasting and wassailing, and there Mauvoisin was in the act of plighting his troth to an heiress of broad lands and rich money bags. But as he stood at the altar of St. Chad's, a voice cried to him, 'Draw, caitiff, draw, that I may avenge my mother's death!' and Gawyne de Boteler, with naked sword, stood beside him. The coward—for Mauvoisin was as base as cruel—quailed, and shrinking back, clung to the altar, and the priests that were ministering there. 'Good friends,' he said, in a trembling voice, 'defend me from this madman: bid him remember that this place is sanctuary! Bear witness all, that I commend me to the keeping of Mother Church.' Gawyne's flashing steel cut short the abject words, and Mauvoisin fell back, a dead man. A fearful uproar arose throughout the church, and resounded from the blood-stained altar by which Gawyne stood motionless. The priests, justly horror-struck, called for punishment on his head. The boon companions and comrades of Mauvoisin joined in the cry, yet durst not touch him. His friends, and such of the spectators as guessed the cause of this frenzied act, made a hedge round Gawyne, and by main force bore him away. From that hour he had been heard of no more, and many, after a while, set him down as dead; nay, the simple peasants on his ancestral estate went so far as to say that his unquiet ghost had been seen flitting on All Souls' day round his mother's grave.

Thus perished Rosamond's visions of delight, 'like ships that have gone down at sea, when heaven was all tranquillity.'

She, to borrow the phrase of an old chronicler, 'took it patiently, and said little;' she only prayed, her father to suffer her to return to their manor-house of Bolyn, and dwell there for a year in strict retirement. Perhaps the seclusion of a nunnery might have had charms for her, but for her deep love of Sir Richard, to whom, she knew, life would become a wilderness, if wholly deprived of her. She strove to master her grief for his sake, and found in prayer and alms-deeds strength to do so. Gawyne's name never passed her lips, for she knew that the heaviest ban of the Church lay upon him, and made him an object of horror even to those who had once loved him well.

So passed the first year of mourning. At its expiration, Sir Richard expressed his desire that Rosamond should return with him to the court, and she obeyed without murmuring, though the effort cost her a world of pain. Her position was, indeed, trying at first, and the looks of pity, curiosity, or malicious scorn cast upon her, were hard to bear; but she passed through this ordeal with the calm dignity which a loving faith in God bestows, and by degrees it was mitigated. After a while, Earl Randle's projected pilgrimage to the Holy Land became the engrossing theme of conversation; he had already taken upon him the cross, on Ash

Wednesday, 1217, and was only waiting till the troubles of England were composed, to redeem his vow ; and now, Henry the Third being firmly fixed on the throne, he felt himself at liberty to depart. The countess preceded him, as we have seen, and in her train travelled Rosamond Fytton and other Cheshire ladies ; it was ordered that these gentle pilgrims should at once proceed to Acre, while their lords joined the crusading host at Damietta.

‘ My Clémence,’ said Earl Randle, when the first greetings were over, ‘ our brother of Arundel, and other knights and lords, purpose ere night close in, to kiss your hand, and greet this fair company. What entertainment can we furnish them here on the bosom of the churlish sea ?’

‘ We have looked to that already,’ replied in French the mirth-loving countess, ‘ and have added to our wonted fare, quails from the marshes of Italy, sardines from Palma, and fine cakes from Sicily. These cates, with store of muscadel and pimento, may surely suffice for pilgrims’ needs ; unless,’ she added, maliciously, ‘ we except a certain pilgrim I wot of, that once bartered a palfrey for a lamprey with King John of unblest memory.’

The earl laughed at the remembrance of this transaction. ‘ I had little choice in that bargain,’ he answered : ‘ ’tis ill haggling with kings ;—but see, here come our guests !’

The Earl of Arundel and his train, and several

others of England's noblest chivalry, now appeared, and greetings—some joyous, some stately—ensued. The deep blue vault of heaven was the only roof over their heads, for the light awning which at noon-day had afforded a needful screen, had been removed at sunset; no clear cool ripple disturbed the sea or the images of a thousand stars mirrored in its pure depths. The moon had now emerged from her veil of haze, and assumed a more natural and silvery hue, yet so keen and bright as to eclipse the stars on her side of heaven. Puffs of dry burning air came oftener than before, ruffled the face of the water for a single moment, then died away, leaving it glittering and smooth as the blade of a sword. The great white sails caught those wandering breezes, gave forth a hollow sound and flapped languidly, then relapsed into stillness.


What fitter scene than this could be for music, poetry, and sentiment? And much of these lay dormant in the breasts of our Anglo-Norman ancestors, whom the troubadour influences had reached sufficiently to soften and refine without corrupting. The present company being all bound for Palestine (yet with the prospect of a painful parting and many perils to be encountered before that desired haven could be reached), a tinge of romance allied with sadness was thrown over their intercourse. The countess observed this, and willing to discard the sadness while she fostered the romance, bade a young gentleman of her household, named Hugo

Fitzwarin, give them an ‘English love-carol.’ ‘He has so full and sweetly-toned a pipe,’ she added, apart to the earl, ‘as lends grace even to your harsh island tongue, my dear lord ; his skill somewhat blunts the spikes with which the Britons of old set about their language, as well as their chariot-wheels. Sing, good youth, sing lustily!’ Nothing loth, Hugo sang the following ditty, composed a few years before by some unknown English bard. Hitherto all sentimental or chivalrous strains had been confined to the French or troubadour languages ; it required, therefore, some self-confidence to induce a man to brave the fashion, and prefer his mother-tongue to those softer accents. Let us, therefore, give Hugo credit for his patriotism, and not criticise too severely the quaint barbarisms that mingle with his song :—

‘ Blow, northern wind, send
 Thou my sweetinge ; blow,
 Northern wind, blow, blow, blow !

I know a bird in bower bright,
 That fully seemly is to sight,
 Mirthful maiden of delight,
 Like bird in bower !
 Blow, blow, &c.

Here is coral of goodness,
 Here is rubie of rich fulness,
 Here is crystal of cleanness,
 And banner of beautie.
 Blow, blow, &c.



‘My child,’ said Richard Fytton to his daughter, as they stood apart near the helm, ‘I would the northern blast Hugo sings of, could blow upon thy cheek : it is wan and sunk, and gives, I fear me, true token of failing strength within.’

There was much in Rosamond’s appearance to justify her father’s anxiety. Her complexion, once glowing with clear health, had now faded to a statue-like whiteness, and the form whose every movement had been elastic and joyous, was wasted and full of fragile grace. Perhaps her costume helped to make the change more apparent, for she had adopted the pilgrim’s dress, a wide linen robe falling to the ancles, and girt with a silken cord at the waist. The ‘locks lively and long’ (to use a contemporary poet’s phrase), which once flowed over her shoulders, were braided, and nearly hidden by a short veil, and thus the pale blue-veined temples became visible. A white linen cloak, one of those brought into vogue by the beautiful Queen Dowager Isabel, completed Rosamond’s attire.

‘Care not for me, my dear lord and father,’ she said : ‘I am well in body, and, since I have seen you, well in spirit also. The Lady Clémence is wondrous kind ; my fellow-maidens look no longer strangely on me, and now,’ she added, looking down, ‘your gracious leave to abide in maiden freedom of heart and life, is all the comfort I can desire.’

‘Thou hast it, Rosamond,’ replied Sir Richard, gravely : ‘Heaven forbid I should, for my own

private ends, add more trouble to a heart that is vexed.'

The good knight stifled a sigh which accompanied these words, stifled it so completely that Rosamond's quick ear did not detect the sound.

She laid her hand in her father's with one look of boundless gratitude.

'Alas,' she said, 'that I must part from you at a time so fraught with peril. Would I were a man, to fight by your side at Damietta; or a slave to tend you when wearied in your tent; or even a wandering breeze, to cool you on that burning coast—'

She paused, for memory brought back bright dreams in which she and Gawayne had rejoiced two years before, when first the crusade had been projected—schemes for visiting the Holy Sites together—promises reiterated by him, and gladly drunk in by her, that he would be Sir Richard's guard and shield. Dreams, indeed, they had proved, and where was the dreamer?

Sir Richard's voice failed for a moment to attract Rosamond's attention, as he told her by way of changing the subject, how orderly and well-disciplined the motley army of crusaders under Earl Randle had proved. 'He holds,' added the knight, 'that a Christian host, going against miscreants, must Christianly behave; no ill word, no profaneness, no brawling, will he brook; and one calm night at sea, hearing two men quarrel over their dice, he took up those *same dice*, and flung them into the waves.'

‘Our men of Fallingbrome,’ asked Rosamond, ‘are they in good heart? And how fares it with my uncouth pupil, Ivo of Gausworth, the widow’s son?’

‘But ill,’ replied Sir Richard; ‘he only of my followers droops in these burning heats; I doubt the poor varlet will never see Damietta. His comrades are strong and hearty, and burn with impatience to deal a blow at the Soldan.’

‘Poor Ivo! that broad chest of his was ever weakly,’ said Rosamond; ‘but Don Gregory, the kind leech-monk from Macclesfield, thought a change to sunny lands might lengthen his span; his mother caught at that hope, and gladly let him go. Think you, dear father, I might visit him ere we part, for I have with me dried herbs from the banks of Bolyn, and more potent simples also from Italy, which might allay his cough?’

‘*Certes*,’ replied Sir Richard; ‘myself, or my old trusty Simon, will convoy thee to-morrow to the spital-ship where he lies: he mightily desires to see thee once again.’

So they talked, while the moon, nearly at her full, rose higher and higher, gathering into herself all the radiance of all the stars that whilome shone so bright. They talked on, while snatches of song and light-hearted laughter rose from the festive throng. Sir Richard noted, though Rosamond did not, that more than one gallant, especially Hugo Fitzwarin, cast wistful looks their way; this slight circumstance gave him the key to *his daughter’s* previous request,

and he mentally resolved to free her from the annoyance of unwelcome suitors, though at the sacrifice of his own cherished hopes. He would name the matter to the Countess Clémence, appealing to certain poetical theories touching 'eternal constancy,' which the troubadour lore had instilled into her mind, and which two marriages, contracted more from policy than romance, had not been able to dispel.

Fitzwarin now drew near, and prayed them, in the countess's name, to come to supper. Owing to the straitened accommodation of the ship, not more than eighteen at a time could be seated at the board; so as soon as the meal was despatched they rose, and made way for others. Earl Randle then signed to Sir Richard to draw near, and join the conference in which he and the other lords were engaged. The Lady Clémence, who sat near, beckoned to Rosamond to take a low stool at her feet, and thus the maiden became no uninterested listener to a conversation of grave import.

Earl Randle's part in it was frank, loyal, and yet prudent, as became his high character. He was, indeed, one of the best of the barons in that wild time. Unlike his bold bad father, Earl Hugh, no act of violence, licence, or needless bloodshed, is recorded against him. He exercised kingly power in his own dominions, but, at the same time, took a large share in the concerns of England. He had enjoyed the high favour of Richard Cœur de Lion, and *held one of the three swords at his second coro-*

nation. In 1215 we find him in parliament, openly rebuking King John for his vicious life ; yet, though never backward in ‘asserting the laws of the realm’ and liberties of the people, he ‘was,’ says Dugdale, ‘one of those loyal peers who firmly adhered to the king in his distresses, when many others put themselves in arms against him.’ He gave magnificently to the founding of churches, yet stoutly resisted the encroachments of the popes ; and now he and his compeers were discussing, with knitted brows, the conduct of the Pope’s legate at Damietta. This man, named Cardinal Pelagius, displayed unbounded insolence towards the crusading chiefs, insisting on his right to be commander-in-chief in this holy war, putting by their best laid schemes, and violently carrying out ill-digested measures of his own. Much delay and mischief had been already caused by his folly, and now the English lords conferred together on the best way of setting him aside.

It was midnight ere they dispersed, and Earl Randle lingered a few minutes after the others, as if some weight still rested on his mind. He seated himself by his wife, gazed with unusual abstraction up into the glorious sky, and listened to the midnight chant which rose, solemn and slow, from the galley of the French archbishop. When that sound died away, the earl said abruptly, ‘There are young gallants now-a-days which esteem themselves wiser than their fathers, and smile at recitals of ghosts and spiritual apparitions ; nevertheless such things are,

and for good ends, I wis. Hearken to me, my Clémence : three days after our parting, on Midsummer Night, I slept and dreamed, and lo, my great kinsman, the second Earl Randle, stood before me in armour ! “Go,” said he, “to my ancient chapel of Hopesdale, there found an abbey, and stirt not to enrich it with broad acres. It shall be joy to thee, and to many more ; there,” quoth he, “shall be a ladder fixed ’twixt earth and Heaven, and angels shall ascend and descend thereon, and vows of men shall mount to the throne of God, and the Name of Jesu our Lord shall be extolled day by day.” This, and much more, my great ancestor commanded me ; I was not disobedient to the heavenly message, my Clémence ; and now what say you ?’

The countess put her hand in his, and answered softly, ‘*Dieu l’acrés,*’ which being translated means, ‘God prosper it.’

Earl Randle sprang up joyfully. ‘Then “*Dieu l’acrés Abbey*” shall be its name,’ he said, reverently doffing his cap of mail.

And so it was, and so it remains to this day.*

* The ruins of Dieu l’acrés Abbey may still be seen near Leek, in Staffordshire. Earl Randle’s vision is related in Dugdale’s Baronage.

CHAPTER II.

‘ I ne’er shall reach Heaven’s glorious path,
Yet haply tears may stay
The purpose of His instant wrath,
And slake the fiery day.’—*Lyra Apostolica*.

THERE were many watchers on board the fleet that night, for the excitement of meeting their friends, anxiety respecting the issue of the present enterprise, or in most cases, the growing sultriness of the weather, banished sleep from their eyes. Rosamond was early afoot next morning, and looked out for the little bark which was to convey her to Ivo of Gansworth’s bed-side, but it came not. Her father was detained by matters of public import so grave and pressing that he may be pardoned for forgetting poor Ivo’s existence altogether. The fact was that at the first blush of dawn a number of vessels had been descried on the eastern horizon. Their strong build showed them at once to be from the north-western ports of Europe ; as they drew near, and their crews could be distinguished, it became evident that the men belonged to no southern race, but might claim kindred with the Vikings. They proved to be Dutch warriors, whose crusading ardour had impelled them to join the besiegers of Damietta some months before.

But the passive courage of endurance, these 'giants of thew and sinew' did not possess. They grew weary of inaction day after day, in a hot and unhealthy climate, and at the first alarm of plague they took to their ships, and set forth homewards.

A monkish chronicler of that time writes bitterly of their desertion of the good cause, and tells us, not without a touch of exultation, that shortly after their return home the ocean broke through its boundaries, submerged some of the richest provinces of Holland, and swept away many towns, with all their inhabitants. This he evidently regards as a judgment from Heaven on their lukewarmness.

A body of Breton gentlemen had taken advantage of the sailing of this armament to return to their homes.

It was a fine and enlivening sight to see the liquid highway thus alive with vessels of every sort and size. The pilgrims and crusaders of that day not unfrequently compared themselves to birds of passage skimming over the surface of the sea, and the comparison was the more apt, because spring and autumn were the seasons selected by them for their flight. In March and September 'proud navies' rode on the bosom of the Mediterranean, which during the other ten months was comparatively deserted. The Dutch fleet was advancing slowly by reason of the calm, and cautiously because its mariners were little acquainted with that southern *sea*.

Presently it was hailed by a great shout from the outward-bound pilgrims; 'What news from Damietta?' was their cry, which for a time obtained no response. The French and English lords grew impatient, and a small chaloupe was despatched to obtain the desired information. It returned quickly, bringing three Breton gentlemen, one of whom came on board the Earl of Chester's galley.

'Ah,' said he, 'fair sire of Kérouailles, is that you? Meseems, you are soon weary of the Cross! Hath it galled your shoulders already?'

'Not the Cross, but the crozier galls them, Lord Earl,' replied the sturdy Breton, shrugging his broad shoulders expressively. 'This meddling Cardinal makes puppets of us all, and none in the camp dare shoot a harquebuss, nor wag an eyelid but by his leave! Nay, for so much as he is purse-bearer, King John of Jerusalem, and proud Duke Leopold must vail their bonnets to his eminence! I and my mates can stomach it no longer.'

The earl looked much disturbed, and after some moments of gloomy musing said,

'If this infection of mutiny spread, the pilgrim host will melt away like snow in April. Then shall the Pagans laugh us to scorn, ay, and think basely of the most Blessed Captain, Whose ensign we bear. Oh, shame that thus it should be! Speak, Richard Fytton (for thou art one whose prowess is tempered by wisdom), what remedy for these disorders?'

‘I know of none,’ replied Sir Richard, ‘save the most ancient, and, to hot spirits, most distasteful remedy of patience. It, like the smooth sea-sand, curbs those proud waves of self-will, which would but dash themselves to foam against the rocks. Perchance these brave Breton gentlemen may yet be ruled by you, my Lord, in this matter, and turn back with us to the path of glory and salvation?’

De K rouailles was, in fact, hesitating already, and half ashamed of the fit of spleen which had caused his hasty departure from Egypt. He felt much respect for Earl Randle, who during the few years of his union with Constance of Brittany had ruled her domains justly, though sternly, and presently a strong desire to fight for the Cross, under such a leader, arose in his mind. Half an hour sufficed to ripen this desire into action, and ere the sun had risen high in heaven he was on his way to the Dutch fleet to announce his own resolve of turning back to Damietta, and to invite his brother Bretons to do the same. That part of his mission was, however, unsuccessful, as scarcely a dozen could be persuaded to follow his example; ere noon, this little handful had transported themselves and their effects on board the crusading fleet. By so doing, these gallant men saved their lives as well as their honour, for we read that ‘the Breton pilgrims, who cowardly deserted the Cross, were wrecked on the coast of Italy, and almost to a man perished.’

De K rouailles continued to be the guest of Earl

Randle, and scarcely was he installed on board his vessel when that lord and his warlike companions pressed round him for details respecting the siege. The Breton willingly told how he with his fellows had reached Egypt in April, and found the Christian army encamped on a vast plain to the right of the Nile, divided from the city by that noble river. Damietta, he said, stood about a mile inland, protected by a strong double rampart on the side of the Nile, and by a triple wall on the three other sides; he spoke in rapturous terms of the marvellous richness of the flat country that stretched round the Christian camp; its groves of orange and lemon trees bearing fruit and blossom at the same time; its thickets of jessamine and other sweet-scented shrubs; its tall woods of palm and sycamore. He described the broad, calm, lake-like river, now studded with hundreds of European ships, and the small canals cut from it in every direction, watering rich crops of rice, and crowned with papyrus and other reeds of dazzling greenness. These objects, beheld under a cloudless sky, had, he said, 'intoxicated them with joy;' and an almost total eclipse of the moon, which took place a few days after their landing, had been construed into a presage of immediate victory to themselves, and ruin to the 'Crescent.'

These sanguine hopes had been dashed by the folly and selfishness of their leaders. Their first attacks had been directed on a tower built on an

islet in the middle of the Nile, and connected with the city wall by a tremendous iron chain. To break through this chain, and so obtain a passage for the ships, was needful before the city could be invested in form. Several bold but desultory attempts to effect this were made, and many of the flower of the crusaders perished, but for want of union, nothing was achieved.

It was a painful and humbling narrative. Earl Randle felt it so, and grew more restless and uneasy every moment. With the true English dislike to all statements of grievances that do not admit of a summary cure, he sprang up at last from the gun-wale on which he was seated.

‘Prythee, good K  rouailles!’ he cried, ‘change thy note: leave we this undigested lump of evils to be dealt with as heaven shall grant us wit—say rather what knightly deeds, what flashes of truth and valour have shone forth from the thick smoke of your discords!’

‘Many, my Lord,’ replied the Breton; ‘so many, that ’twere an envious task to award the palm of chivalry to one above the rest. By your good leave however, I will relate to you a feat of arms which has not been excelled in this or in any war; I myself was eye-witness thereof.’

‘Speak on,’ replied the earl, resuming his seat, while his warriors, at a sign from him, drew nearer, and formed a semi-circle of eager listeners.

De K  rouailles obeyed at once.

‘I have told you, friends,’ he said, ‘of the strong tower built in the midstream of Nile, whereby all our endeavours to draw near to Damietta were long baffled ; many times we sought to take it with ladders, and grappling-irons, but in vain ; Nile himself fought against us, now out of his due season rising, and drowning the country round. Bold fishes swam into our very tents, and were caught by us in our hands, though willingly would we have lacked such dainties, seeing that the sauce was more than the m^eat ! Against this mischief we fenced ourselves with prayer and fast. It straightway abated, and we to our shifts again, to repair the damage !

‘Heard ye ever of a priest named Oliver, of Cologne ? This man is gifted with more than mortal skill in the devising of machines of war ; under his eye, a tower was built, the rarest piece in that kind the world ever saw ; two galleys, straightly bound together, were the foundation ; the walls were of wood, high and terrible to behold, as the walls of a castle ; therefrom hung a draw-bridge which might be hooked on to the island tower, and covered ways whereby our soldiers might reach it unhurt. Night and day hundreds of cunning workmen laboured at this tower, and every true-hearted crusader, from King John down to the meanest groom, gave of their substance towards it.

‘It was decreed that on the Feast of Bartholomew the assault should be given. The Archbishop of Jerusalem and his clergy, the proud legate and his

swarm of Italian priests, walked in solemn procession to the sea, followed by all our host barefoot, and chanting litanies. King John kneeled down with discrowned head on the shore, and prayed, with his face towards Jerusalem ; none broke his fast till sunset on that day. Then we returned to the camp, and lo, a herald proclaimed throughout our ranks that Leopold Duke of Austria would lead on the assault ; all rejoiced at this, knowing him to be the very pattern of Christian knighthood. Three hundred men were chosen to man the tower with him, and more than three thousand would have given their right hands to have been of that glorious number.

‘Forgive me, gentles, if I tell you how my heart bounded for joy to hear myself proclaimed one of Duke Leopold’s band. It fell out thus : on Bartholmy eve, that fearless prince had ridden with but few followers into the open champaign, and there been beset by a gang of Saracens ; I espying his jeopardy, went to his rescue, but the Pagan dogs were three to one, and it would have gone hard with us all, but for a tall and noble-looking young gentleman, to me unknown, who chanced to see our peril ; he put the Saracens to flight, helped up the duke, whose charger, sorely wounded, had borne him to the ground, and turned back with us to the Austrian camp. Here both he and I should have ta’en our leave, but the duke would have it otherwise, saying, “Nay, gentlemen, nay, come on and sup with me ; but for you, I should have had a

bloody supper this night." I obeyed, nothing loth, but the stranger drew back. "I crave your Grace's pardon," he answered, in Norman-French, "I am bound by vow neither to sit at feast, nor taste of wine ; the wherefore may not be revealed." He bowed low, and would have gone, but Duke Leopold laid a hand on his arm. "Bear with thee, brave youth," he said, "this token of my life-long gratitude," and he unclasped from about him a girdle richly set with precious stones ; a fair ruby, cut in likeness of a rose, sparkled in front of it. Once more the stranger drew back, putting both hands behind him. "I may not," he said, coldly : "herein also my vow is binding ; I pray your Highness take my thanks, and let me go." The prince looked earnestly on him, and so did we, and saw at once that he was robed in the garb of a penitent ; his shirt of hair-cloth might be seen through the rings of the hauberk ; no gold nor silver-gemmed baldric, nor jewelled sword-hilt, pranked him out ; and his cap of mail lacked the crest, which none that saw him could doubt him born to wear. His surcoat (smile not, gentles, for in that blazing heat none could bear the scorching of bare metal) was of white serge ; and his beard of glossy chestnut was long and untrimmed. An aventaille of mail hid his features ; nor could we discern the blazonry on his shield, by reason of a scarf of serge that covered it.

' Some few such penitents there are scattered, as ye know, throughout our host, but they are mostly

hoary sinners, whose deeds of blood or rapine are known to all. We marvelled, therefore, inwardly, for what cause this fair and stately youth wore the garb of shame. The duke sighed, and muttered to himself, "strange!" then drew nearer to the penitent, and laid a strong hand on his shoulder. "I am your debtor, young gentleman," he said, half-whispering, "and for no less a thing than life. Speak frankly, therefore, and if lands or gold laid at the foot of the Altar can avail aught for your peace, ask, and they shall be yours."

'The stranger buried his face in both hands, then of a sudden flung himself at Duke Leopold's feet, sobbing like a child. He kissed the hands, the scarf of that peerless prince, in a wild ecstasy of gratitude and sorrow; then gathering himself up, he said as though ashamed of this passion, "Your gentleness, great Duke, hath made a woman of me; me softly nurtured once, now poor indeed; me you have deigned to look upon, and not in scorn! The gracious heavens, to which I dare not look, reward you a thousand-fold!"

'He turned and left us, slowly wending his way toward the solitary plain that stretched southward; his charger, a strong and noble beast of Arabian breed, followed him like a dog. We looked at one another, longing to follow and ask his name and whereabouts, but something in Duke Leopold's eye held us mute. He, after a brief pause, beckoned me to him, and spake thus:

“ You likewise, fair Sir, have done me notable service ; as I said to yonder unhappy young gentleman, so now I say to you, what guerdon can Austria render for such timely succour ? ”

‘ Crusaders, you have already guessed the prayer I preferred to the duke ; he granted it with a smile, and straightway enrolled me amongst the three hundred. Priest Oliver’s clerkly pen inscribed my name in that glorious scroll, and, as he did so, he said, “ My son, hereby thou dost assure to thyself full remission of sins, and life eternal.” The duke, who stood near, turned to him with thoughtful brow. “ Father,” quoth he, “ do these promises hold good to one excommunicate or under the ban of Holy Church ? ” The priest mused awhile : “ Undoubtedly, my son ; what says the bull of Pope Eugene III ?—‘ In the name of God and the blessed Peter, prince of Apostles, we promise plenary remission of all sins, whatsoever they be, to all who with contrite heart engage in holy pilgrimage.’ The promise has no condition.”

“ One question more, Father,” asked Duke Leopold : “ is the tale of men for our adventure yet complete ? Read o’er the list and tell me.” Priest Oliver read aloud names, noble names of knights and gentlemen, all known to fame by some brave or generous deed. “ There are two hundred, ninety and nine,” he said : “ it lacks yet one.” “ My liege,” interposed an Austrian esquire, “ there are fifty gentlemen at the *least waiting without*, praying you

accept their service on St. Bartholmy's Day." "Brave hearts!" cried the duke, "would we had room for every one of them; but numbers would but choke and impede our enterprise. I will go speak with them." He went forth, first beckoning me to his side. "Kérouailles," he said, "take two men with thee, mount fresh horses all of you, and go seek my young deliverer out; tell him I add his name to the roll of fame, and that I trust in God he will so do and dare as to re-open for himself the gates of Paradise."

'Twere tedious, gentles, to tell you how I sought out that forlorn one, and how at midnight I found him, sleeping a dreamy and feverish sleep, under shelter of the whispering reeds. He had doffed his cap and hauberk, and bared his breast to the breeze. Truly—though unused to the melting mood—my heart yearned to the lad, when I marked his wasted limbs, and tear-stained cheeks. "He is his mother's darling, an' she yet 'live," was my first cogitation; my next, "How shall this spare form bear the brunt of to-morrow's assault?" As I stooped over him, he woke, and started to his feet, questioning me of my errand; 'twas soon told, and then what a ray of joy and glory lit up his face!

'We hasted back to the camp as soon as young Tristan (so he bade me call him) had donned his armour, and caparisoned his steed. The duke sent for him, and they two conferred alone, and, as it would *seem*, very earnestly, for upwards of half-an-hour.

What they said, I know not : there was little time for wordy compliment, for day was blushing in the east, and each man had much to do ere it broke. The whole fleet was in movement, every captain bringing up his galley to its appointed starting-point, all eager to follow where we should lead the way. The rest of our army-at-land stood in battle array on the banks of the weltering Nile. At sunrise we could discern a great stir in the town, and sounds of many voices ; for within Damietta dwelt not Egyptians only, but Arabs, Moors, Indians, and Ethiops. These, guessing dimly at our intent, crowded to the walls and battlements to spy our movements, or rushed into the suburbs skirting the river, to withdraw their effects and merchandise.

‘Tristan and I betook us early to our floating castle ; there, with eagle gaze and quick yet ripe judgment, the youngster noted every strong and every weak point of this marvellous edifice. His keen eye next rested on the island tower, measured the length and thickness of the iron chain that joined it to the town, surveyed the Paynim navy, now mustering in force, then perused our own fair fleet bathed in sunshine, and bright with pendants. He said little, but a fixed resolve glittered in his eye.

‘Duke Leopold came aboard at nones : he greeted us cheerily, as a bridegroom doth his wedding company. His armour of mail shone like gold ; his glance was bright and serene as the rising sun. The clang of arms seemed *music* in his ear, long wearied

with strifes and brawlings. We knew not then, but knew too well ere sunset, that he and Cardinal Pelagio had even now been engaged in fierce debate. It had reached the ear of that prying Italian that the duke had added Tristan to his body-guard; he willing on any pretext to pick a quarrel, annulled that choice, preferring a kinsman of his own to the vacant post. The insulted majesty of Austria brooked not such meddling, and so they parted in wrath; Duke Leopold sought benison and shrift from the Bishop of Jerusalem, then rushed to battle as the lion to his prey.

‘It lacked two hours of noon when our vast floating tower ’gan move towards Damietta; a clarion blast was the concerted signal, and ere the echo of its shrill note had died away, all the fleet was astir, and following in our wake. Loud shouts from our brethren ashore rent the air, whilst a sound of wailing rose from the crowded ramparts of the town. We glided swiftly to the foot of the watch-tower, there cast anchor, and at once discharged a volley of javelins at its defenders. Meanwhile, certain of our number appointed by the duke, cast grappling irons into the tower, and made fast to it the draw-bridge we had prepared. Then wielding lance and sword, we rushed to the attack, when lo, we were driven back by torrents of Greek fire that spouted in our faces. They cleft the air, hissing and crackling like the falling lightbolt, filling the air with livid flame, and stifling us with fetid smoke. Some, like living

dragons, leaped into the river, and blazed more fiercely than before on its surface ; some fell around us, scorching our hands and faces, and blinding our eyes. Oh ! horrible, most horrible device of Satan leagued with impious men ! well might King Philip fall upon his face whenever from afar he heard thy roaring, and cry, “ Lord, Lord, have mercy on my people ! ” I know not how long this rain of fire and brimstone lasted : in mortal struggle, hours seem moments, and moments hours. We stood our ground unshaken, till a tongue of flame, straight from the pit’s mouth, came flying towards us. It shook its wings, before, behind, around us, and lo, the castle was on fire ! I heard, through the hurly-burly, shouts of joy and mockery from Damietta ; turning my head to catch a breath of air, I saw our host fall as one man to the earth, in lowliest supplication for us to the Most High. He, whom we call Tristan, saw it too, and once more that beam of glory lit up his brow. “ On, brothers, on,” he cried : “ the path to Paradise lies by Hell’s mouth ! ” He leaped on the draw-bridge with drawn sword, and we followed him. Alas ! that was on fire too, and yielded beneath Tristan’s light weight, cracking and falling away, all but one link that still hung on to our tower. The pennon of Austria, which had floated there, fell, and was sucked up by the mighty river. Young Tristan vaulted backward, still turning his face toward the foe. “ Haste, haste,” said he, “ give me yon coil of rope ; but first the vinegar ! ” It is

known to you, comrades, that naught else but vinegar hath power to extinguish that hellish flame ; we rolled the casks towards him, and he unflinchingly poured the hissing liquid on the bridge. Then with dexterous hands he made it fast to the tower with rope, and sprang upon it merrily, crying, "The mischief is repaired ! now on, for God and the true Cross !"

' O glorious hour ! We pressed forward, wielding our bills, battle-axes, and iron-tipped clubs. "For God and Austria !" shouted some. "For fair Florence, and her white Lilies !" cried other some. "For Blessed Mary and the Temple !" thundered a knight of that order, thrusting forward, as though emulous of Tristan's prowess. Together they twain leaped into the midst of the Saracens, we keeping close behind. The astonished infidels fled down a narrow stair, hoping, doubtless, to reach their boats and so escape —hoping, likewise, to compass our destruction, for presently thick smoke burst from the floor beneath our feet, and curling flame followed, kindled by them. 'Twas the last struggle of despair ; our engines now surrounded their fort ; our bold three hundred streamed over the draw-bridge, trampling down the fire, and hoisting the ensign of victory. Duke Leopold laid about him lustily, and while his arm was thus engaged, his piercing eye directed all, and no deed of daring escaped its ken !

' Thus the island fort was won. Our foes lay dying *or dead* at our feet ; Nile was strewn with corpses ;

the townsmen of Damietta fled shrieking from their ramparts, while shouts of triumph rose from the Christian host. A clarion blast warned us to quit the watch-tower, whose walls, battered, bruised, and crumbling, bade fair to tumble about our ears ; only young Tristan and I, with a dozen bold fellows, remained behind, busied in severing the great chain from its staple, deep fixed in masonry. This, with much toil, we achieved, while Paynim arrows hurtled harmlessly o'er our heads. Oh ! 'twas worth a lifetime of such toil to see that chain drop sullenly away ! Down, down it fell thundering, and sank in the mighty waters !

‘ Our fleet now rode proudly on Nile’s broad breast, and presently cast anchor opposite the town. They landed their freight of soldiers on the further shore ; these, entering the suburbs, put all they found there to the sword, even to the last man.

‘ So ended this day ; perchance, gentles, it may be news to you that the fame of it carried to Sultan Malek-Adel at Cairo, so shook his enfeebled frame, that for grief and choler he died. I heard, the day before our hasty embarkation, that Meledîn, the eldest of his fifteen sons, is elected Soldan in his room.’

‘ Good K  rouailles,’ said Sir Richard Fytton, when the Breton paused, ‘ tell us, I prythee, how fared it with thy penitent ? Tristan, sayest thou was his name ?’

‘ He did so call himself,’ replied De K  rouailles ;

‘but methought the name was borrowed from his strange and pitiful hap, not given in Holy Baptism. Our soldiers called him “the left-handed” and justly, for with that bold left-hand of his he could throw a lance as far as most men with their right.’

‘Aye! indeed, could he so?’ said the Earl of Chester, glancing significantly at Sir Richard.

The latter rose in visible agitation.

‘I never saw but two men,’ continued the Earl, who could boast of that skill; both were brought up to arms at my court by Hubert of Dinan, and both came to woeful mischance. One,’ he added, ‘lowering his voice to a stern whisper, ‘was the ill-starred Fitzsimon, whom King John, in a fit of groundless jealousy, hanged to a cross-beam in Queen Isabel’s chamber. The other was a young gentleman from Shropshire, even such an one in years and bearing as you, fair Sir, have pourtrayed; he now wanders abroad with the curse of Cain on his head, having slain a man in sanctuary.’

‘Perchance the very same,’ observed De Kérouailles; ‘of what crime my Tristan stands accused I wot not, but that he is gentle-natured, and gentle-nurtured, and would do no wrong unless wrought to frenzy, I dare be sworn.’

‘You wax hot, friend,’ said Earl Randle, pleased with the Breton’s generous warmth. ‘Now close your recital of the events of that glorious day, forgetting not to tell how it fared with the lad.’

‘Oh, ’tis a tale,’ replied the Breton, ‘to move your pity, scorn, and rage. Duke Leopold, as soon as the fight was over, returned to the camp with us, his body-guard; King John met him, begrimed and gory, and these two lion-like warriors greeted one another as father and son might do—there was ever strict unbroken amity betwixt them—then the grey-headed king doffed his cap to us, saying, “Ye have well done, my brothers: one more such day, and Damietta is ours!” and so it must have been, had those two princes been hearkened to. Scarcely had they washed their hands, and broke their fast, when heralds went through the camp, calling every leader to council. Our chief obeyed the summons, and from him I learnt the fashions of that assembly, say rather bear-garden. The Majesties of Jerusalem and Austria frankly proposed a general attack no later than the ensuing dawn; every true soldier present jumped at the bold plan, which they with good and weighty arguments, enforced. But faction, alack! was rife in that motley gathering—some were jealous, some timorous, most over-ridden by the proud legate; he, now presenting himself, like a torch set all ablaze, and with fierce words and gestures the council broke up. Blood would have been let but for the rare coolness of Duke Leopold, truly the only man in our host that has learnt to rule his own spirit! He chode the insolent, upheld the weak, sent all to their tents seemingly appeased—nay, he did violence to himself, praying the cardinal to for-

give his hasty outbreak of the morning, and set it down to his rude soldierly breeding. The wily Italian spake him fair, malice the while twinkling in his eye ; his words were softer than butter, having war in his heart.

‘ We, meanwhile, of the duke’s body-guard, remained near his tent awaiting his return from council. We lay on the sand, under a grove of broad-leaved, spreading carob trees ; here we quaffed Cyprus wine (for of that and all dainties ye shall find no lack in our camp), and fought our battles o’er again with glowing hopes for the morrow.

‘ Tristan, true to his vow, held back from the wine-cup ; but as he sat beneath the carob shade, and furbished his armour, there was a look of hope and gladness on his face. His scorched brows and blackened lips were but trophies of victory, that made him fairer in our eyes. As for me, my heart was knit to him brotherly.

‘ Night had closed in, the partridge and wild dove were silent on Nile’s bank, and heaven had lit up all her burning tapers ere Duke Leopold had returned. He came at last, sad, silent, and stern. He had good cause for grief ; the Dutch even then were meditating their departure, pretexting plague as an excuse for haste. Our own chief, weary of brawls, had resolved to go likewise, taking his six thousand with him. Many more, on one excuse or another, were dropping away ; the fruits of five months’ toil and of that day’s victory were snatched from our

lips in a moment ; our name henceforth would be a by-word amongst the heathen !

‘ We guessed but dimly at all this, till the morrow made it plain. Duke Leopold spoke briefly to us, bidding us go to rest, such rest as beseemed warriors of the Cross, whose weapons should ever be at their side ! He beckoned Tristan aside, and me with him, and said, “ Young gentleman, I have not forgot your matter : the Cardinal and I have discoursed thereon, and he has promised, as guerdon for your good service this day, to grant you instant absolution. If there be faith in man, he will, he must redeem this promise. He bids you go to him to-night on board his galley, and says the parchment will be ready. My chaloupe, with twenty armed men, waits to convey you to him.”

‘ Tristan’s reply was brief but glowing. He thanked the duke, whose gracious intercession, he said, “ restored him to more than life. He would at once hasten to the cardinal, but prayed for leave to go alone ; why should a stranger, an outcast, be thus lordly attended, and cause so much ado ? ”

“ Not a word,” answered the duke quickly, “ it concerns mine honour ; ” then seeing young Tristan abashed and blushing, his highness added, “ Tomorrow, if time permit, we will confer of thy future ; it shall be my care to provide for that.” He cut all thanks short, and turned into his pavilion, commending Tristan to me.

‘ We sought the chaloupe together, Tristan’s heart overflowing with delight, mine heavy, for the fears and suspicions which beset noble Austria’s mind had infected me. How can I tell you, gentles, the end of this strange coil, wrapped as it is in darkness ?

‘ The cardinal’s guard were waiting to lead Tristan to his eminence ; not one of us was suffered to go on board with him. We saw lights twinkling, heard voices, gathered that solemn council was going on, and that some brothers of Dominick, fresh from crusade with the abhorred Albigenses were there. An hour passed, two hours, and Tristan came not. I strained both eyes and ears long, but at length drowsiness o’ercame me, and I slept. A loud cry woke me, and looking up, I saw Tristan struggling in the arms of strong dark-vested men on the deck of the galley.

‘ “ To the rescue, brothers ! ” I shouted to our half-slumbering crew. “ Boatmen, to your oars ! ”

‘ While I spoke, Tristan broke loose from the men that hung upon him as dogs on the haunches of the stag. One bound landed him in the chaloupe, and we pulled as for our lives till we reached the shelter of a friendly Dalmatian galley. Then, more leisurely, we rowed on towards our camp, coasting the left bank of Nile.

‘ All this while Tristan spoke not, heeded not our questionings, wagged not a finger for the furthering of his own deliverance ; he stood erect, sometimes *flinging his arms* over his head with gestures of

despair. When day broke, I looked into his face, and saw it dark and wild. I spoke to him, shook his arm ; he looked on me fiercely, with bent brows, and said, "De K rouailles, seest thou yonder broken column on the shore ? I pray thee land me there, and pass on." I would have gainsayed him, but durst not, seeing madness in his eye.

' "The Duke of Austria," I asked, "hast thou no message for him ?"

' "None," he made answer ; "what should an unblest desperate man say to him ?"

' "Nay, my Tristan, not desperate," I pleaded, "mother church, so say our priests, has ever a blessing in store for him who patiently 'bides her frown." He shook me off roughly.

' "She hath no blessing for me ;" he muttered hoarsely, "me she spurns, contemns, accuses falsely of heresies my soul abhors ; is it for this I have humbled myself in dust and ashes, borne scourging, shame, and penance, nay, courted them as a true knight courts glory ? Have years of anguish no power to wipe out the frenzy of one moment ? If it be so, then farewell all gentle thoughts, farewell, repentance ! farewell, hope ! I cast you to the winds ! despair, be thou my guide !"

' I am no clerk to minister ghostly comfort to minds diseased, and truly my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth as Tristan uttered words so reckless and godless. He waited no reply, but with one bound sprang from our chaloupe to the muddy

bank of Nile. There he paused a moment, stretched his arms toward me in token of adieu, then buried himself in the cool and dewy reeds.

‘I saw him no more ; I sought him in the lonely hut he had built for himself without the camp, but in vain. His Arab charger was gone also. Two days later a swarthy Copt, whose speech I understood not, brought to my tent a falchion of rare workmanship, Tristan’s parting token. Mine eyes ran over at this proof of a kindly nature, kindly though disordered.

‘Duke Leopold, sent for us, and questioned us straitly touching the matter, but we could tell him little. I learnt afterwards that he and the legate had high words concerning it, Pelagio affirming that Tristan had been recognized by a Dominican in his train, as a favourer of the Albigenses, a dweller amongst them. The matter was hushed up, and quickly forgotten, or swallowed up in newer and heavier grievances. Three days later we set sail from Damietta, and so, gentles, my story is ended.’

CHAPTER III.

‘Bound for holy Palestine,
Nimbly we brush’d the level brine,
All in azure steel array’d;
O’er the wave our weapons play’d,
And made the glancing billows glow.’—*Warton*.

THE conference was broken up, and Earl Randle’s attention called to other matters. Sir Richard Fytton and the bold Breton conversed a few moments apart, then proceeded together to examine the faulchion of which De K  rouailles had spoken. Sir Richard recognized it at once by the three covered chalices, the device of the De Botelers, inlaid in brass on its crooked blade. This was complete confirmation of his previous suspicions, and indeed it was scarcely needed, for every line in the portrait of the unhappy Tristan corresponded so exactly with the character of Gawyne de Boteler, as to have carried conviction to Sir Richard’s mind long before. He was a good deal affected by the discovery. Outwardly and in word and deed he had renounced all connection with De Boteler ever since the commission of the frantic act, which had placed him under the ban of the Church. They had not met; Rosamond’s long-sanctioned engagement had

never been formally repealed, Gawwyne's present position rendering any such act needless. He was, to all intents and purposes, dead ; cut off from the charities of life, and from the Sacraments of the Church—forbidden to join in her services, or lay his bones, in death, under her shadow.

Sir Richard was a wise and good man, but he was not above the prejudices of the age he lived in, and therefore had acquiesced, though with grief, in Gawwyne's sentence. Doubts of its justice had sometimes arisen in his mind. The thought would force itself upon him that Mauvoisin's crimes and baseness, and the tragical death of Gawwyne's gentle mother, were enough to palliate, though not to justify his rash deed, and that it was rather the offspring of momentary madness than of crime. He could not but see, in other cases as well as in Gawwyne's, that the awful power of excommunication had fallen into corrupt hands, and was often used for worldly ends, not for the warning or conversion of sinners. The world was still ringing with the history of Raimond, Count of Toulouse, and the fearful sentence pronounced on him ten years before by Innocent III. This prince, one of the greatest nobles at the French court, had been falsely accused of favouring the Albigenses, deprived of two-thirds of his patrimony, dragged with a halter round his neck through his town of St. Gilles, and scourged ignominiously in the sight of his subjects. Cardinal *Pelagio*, into whose hands Gawwyne had fallen, was

as arrogant and implacable as Innocent himself. A chronicler who was personally acquainted with him, tells us that ‘he did bring the threats of the church to bear on all who would not act exactly after his fashion!’ Sir Richard doubted not that the legate’s severity towards the ill-fated youth had been increased by the grudge he bore to Gawyne’s patron, Duke Leopold; yet that chivalrous prince was unable to interfere in his behalf.

The good knight was perplexed to know how Gawyne could have fallen under the charge of heresy. He remembered, however, having heard a rumour that he had taken refuge in the valleys of Auvergne from the obloquy which pursued him wherever his history became known. It was possible some amongst the Dominicans might have seen his face there, and mixed him up with the wild sectaries, ‘Bons hommes,’ ‘Poor men of Lyons,’ or ‘Flagellants,’ who swarmed in that district. ‘Alas,’ thought the knight, ‘that a lad of so noble conditions, and of a temper so sweet, should have had the blood within him turned to gall! what recklessness of life may he not fall into, now the last hope of better days is gone? O my poor wench, the stars shone darkly o’er thee when thou didst plight thy troth to this young gentleman. How shall I tell thee, or how hide the story of his now desperate case? To tell it is to kill the lingering hope within thy breast; to hide it, is perhaps false kindness, since some careless or cruel tongue may blab it in thy

hearing. Truly it passes thy blunt father's wit to resolve this doubt, but I will lay the matter before our Lady Clémence, and bespeak her gentleness for thee ; though mirthful, she is kind, and being woman, can read a woman's heart where I but dimly spell.'

This soliloquy occupied Sir Richard as the Earl's felucca bore him towards the Countess's galley. Noon was long past, but the sun's decline brought no relief to the sultriness of the air. It was no longer clear ; masses of vapour had formed on the horizon all round, and gradually spread upward till they blotted out the sun's rays ; yet the glare was greater than before, and a reddish hue tinged the atmosphere faintly. The Italian sailors, distinguished from our English seamen by their white jackets and blue fez caps, looked at one other and murmured the ominous word 'Burrasca.' The sea was leaden and mirror-like, but now and then it rose into rolling waves. At their close approach every timber in every vessel creaked and groaned, and each keel received a thump, like the shock caused by an earthquake ; then they rolled onward, and all was still and breathless as before.

The countess and her ladies noticed the signs of coming storm not without disquiet. They felt, however, nothing approaching to alarm, for most of them were well used to the sea. Rough passages between England and Normandy, and, in some instances, between Wales or Liverpool and the newly

annexed kingdom of Ireland, had proved a salutary preparation for this longer voyage. They therefore talked, worked, laughed at Messer Tholomieu's jests, or listened to Provençal lays, as usual, except when interrupted for a moment by the shocks we have described. These grew more vehement as afternoon deepened into evening. At length a strong buffet, and a peal like far-off thunder which accompanied it, brought mirth and song to a sudden stop. That deep prolonged muttering seemed a warning voice to each heart, saying, in the words of Antonio's boatswain, 'Give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour.' The Countess, whose elasticity of spirit was invincible, was the first to break silence.

'We shall have a wild night of it, my maidens,' said she, 'and a rude tossing on our ocean cradle, if I read yon storm-red sky aright; but we will meet them cheerily, as pilgrims should. Proceed, my Rosamond, with that crusading chant thou hadst even now begun.'

Rosamond sang, or rather recited in the Provençal romaunce idiom, the following solemn 'sirvente,' as such martial and serious songs were called. It was put together with some art, the rhymes being intertwined something after the fashion of the more modern sonnet. Of course, this and most of its other beauties are lost in translation: a few chords struck upon her small harp, now soft, now loud and keen, added to the effect.

“ “ Brothers, the day is come, the hour is come ; now shall all men see who is worthy to serve the Eternal, and who is not. He calleth, but only the true and brave answer His call ! ”

“ “ O craven spirits, O base dastards, that close your ears against His voice, heard ye never that cry, ‘ Take up your cross and follow Me ? ’ Were it not better to die beyond the seas, fighting His battles, old in glory, though young in years, than to bring down your grey hairs in ignominy to the grave at home ? Repent, return, ere Dooms-day find you out, and it be said to you, ‘ Depart from Me ; My Cross, My stripes, and bitter Passion, ye remembered not ; I never knew you ; depart. ’ ”

“ “ Bold knights, earls, yea, crowned kings, here is salvation for you ; here is the praise of God, ay, and the praise of men also ! Let the Kings of France and England make up their quarrels and come, let the princes of Italy and the great emperor make up their quarrels and come ; come all, and bury your discords in the Holy Sepulchre. ” ”

The lay might have been indefinitely prolonged, and Rosamond’s listeners would not have been weary, but she stopped here, seeing her father at hand, and the felucca in waiting. If her promise of visiting poor Ivo of Gausworth was to be redeemed at all, it must be done at once, for who could tell what changes or rude shocks the coming night might produce ? Sir Richard, reserving his purposed conference with the Lady Clémence for a later hour,

carried off Rosamond at once, and soon they were threading their way between the almost countless vessels that composed the fleet towards the 'Spedal ship,' where lay Ivo.

The number of sick had greatly increased within the last few days, owing to the supply of drinking water on board several ships having become tainted and impure. With the ignorant precipitation common to that age, these sufferers had been suspected of plague, from some slight resemblance in their symptoms to that frightful disease. A panic had been created, and in order to allay it, the Genoese commander had caused a small additional galley to be vacated and the patients removed into it. This little vessel hung in the rear of the fleet and about a bowshot from the Spedal-ship, as though shunning and shunned by all. Sir Richard, who had not previously known its whereabouts, felt a momentary disquiet when he beheld it, and unconsciously drew his daughter closer to him. It comforted him, however, to observe that the wind which was beginning to rise, blew across the felucca towards the suspected vessel.

The word 'plague' was not without its terrors to the ear of Rosamond, who had never witnessed its reality. But she partook largely of that natural attraction towards the fearful and strange which besets us in our young and imaginative days, and this feeling, mingled with compassion, kept her eye fixed on the infected galley. She could plainly dis-

tinguish several men habited in dark grey tunics and hoods, with shaven heads, and with knotted cords fastened round them girdle-fashion, moving quietly to and fro on the deck.

‘Who are those?’ she asked, with much interest. ‘Is it possible they belong to the new order of Friars Minors?’

‘I think they do,’ replied Sir Richard. ‘But what know’st thou of the Friars Minors, child?’

‘Oh, we heard much of them at Brindisi,’ she answered, ‘and much of their founder, one Francis of Assisi; he was the child of rich and doating parents, foremost in every feat of arms, gayest in every festival; yet all these did he quit ten years ago, to take to him, as his wedded wife, the Lady Poverty. He, the dainty one, convinced by a perilous sickness of the vanity of earth, has changed his brave apparel for a mendicant’s robe, and learnt to hug the loathsome leper to his bosom!’

‘The more crack-brained fellow he!’ observed young Fitzwarin, who had accompanied them on board the felucca, and to whom the praises of the noble Umbrian cavalier, uttered with unwonted fervour by Rosamond, appeared by no means acceptable. ‘The marvel is that fools have been found to follow these mad quirks of his! the Minorites, they say, reckon more than four thousand brethren already.’

‘I have heard little of these men hitherto,’ rejoined Sir Richard, ‘but would fain hear more.

One or two amongst them are men of mark, it is said ; the rest, obscure persons of pious intent, but simple like their founder ; if so, their zeal will prove a blaze amongst thorns, which causes great light and heat for one moment, the next is a heap of grey ashes.'

The knight spoke like a sturdy Englishman, full of the true insular contempt for all outward tokens of enthusiasm, believing that they savoured of display, and could produce no practical or lasting results. O Sir Richard Fytton, you are a great man, in Cheshire at least—the most trusted counsellor of the potent Randle de Blondeville ! you shall live and flourish to a good old age as Justiciary of the County Palatine ; your sons, and your sons' sons, for five hundred years shall inherit your broad acres and untarnished honour ; Sir Edward, wise and loyal like yourself, shall hold high office in Ireland with Spenser and Raleigh ; and gallant Edward, his grandson, shall shed his life-blood for the martyr king—but with these worthy names ends your line, and now they are forgotten except by the few. Here and there a lover of musty parchments may recognize the ancient glories of the Fyttons, or a tourist may pause under the ancestral trees of Gausworth, and decypher your monuments in its old grey church, but your footprints in the sands of time are well-nigh blotted out. Meanwhile, he whom you call a 'simple person,' and in your heart despise as a crazy fanatic, has attained world-wide power, as

well as fame. ‘Six centuries have passed,’ and his brotherhood ‘still flourishes, one of the elements of life, if not of progress, in the Christian commonwealth, conspicuous among the pryncedoms, dominations, powers, which hold their rank in the great spiritual dynasty of Rome.’*

Rosamond’s feminine love of the pure and high-wrought was somewhat chilled by her father’s last words, but respect for him kept her from expressing disappointment. Hugo spoke next. ‘This same Francis is now on board our fleet, having taken ship at Ostia for Damietta ; he goes forth with intent to convert the Soldan himself, fondly dreaming that one conference will shake the accursed errors of that son of Mahomet.’

‘If he be a dreamer, so were blessed Peter and Paul,’ observed Rosamond ; ‘they did speak of God’s testimonies, even before princes, and were not ashamed. I would I might see this man of whom such great things are said !’

‘Very like thou mayest, child,’ replied her father, pleased to mark her kindling eye and glowing cheek. ‘He and his brother Minorites tend our sick day and night, and, as I hear from Count Randle’s almoner, with discreet as well as devout charity. Some amongst them frequent our spedal-ship, and if it be

* Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, by Sir T. Stephens. Vol. i. The writer is under the greatest obligations to this *beautiful essay*.

true yonder galley harbour plague, I'll warrant you this brother Francis will be there.'

'He is no squire of dames now, this brother Francis,' observed Fitzwarin, 'whatever he may have been ten years ago, when bearing in his hand the sceptre of the king of frolic, he made Assisi streets ring with his songs. I lit on him one day on board yon consecrated vessel, and truly a less personable man 'twas never my hap to behold. His mean habit blessedly mended with sacking, and his dishevelled hair not shorn like his brethrens', provoked me to a smile.'

'Ah, Cousin Hugo, what matter the husk, if the kernel be sound?' rejoined Rosamond, half sportively. 'I have heard, besides, that this gentleman handles a broadsword rarely, and put down a sedition in Perugia with his unaided arm, when but a strippling.'

The smile which accompanied her words was as sweet and bright as it was rare. Half the sadness which had weighed down her spirit, had vanished with the return of Sir Richard, whom she clung to with more than ordinary filial love. But Hugo's self-confidence, which was not small, misconstrued the smile; it inspired him with a hope that Gawyne's image, already tarnished by reproach and obloquy, had been blotted out of Rosamond's fancy. Might not his own in course of time replace it? He contrasted his position with that of the banished man; he ventured to think that in personal merits he was

Gawyne's equal at least ; moreover, he pondered, with a mixture of chivalrous and self-complacent feeling, on his own generosity in coming forward to rescue the maiden from her present anomalous position. All these considerations inspired him with sanguine hopes, and he took advantage of Sir Richard's being called away for a moment, to press his suit.

‘Gentle lawyer,’ he retorted, ‘the man is happy in thy zealous advocacy ; nevertheless,’ and he bent down towards her and whispered in her ear, ‘should he dare woo thee to become the bride of heaven, as he hath done his sisterhood of “poor Clares,” working upon them by the fervour of his preaching to doff their silks for sackcloth, their jewels for tears of penitence—should he do this, I say, my baffled hopes shall frame a sure revenge.’

Rosamond rose and drew back, deeply hurt. The quick blood flew to her cheeks, and the quick reply to her lips ; ‘If this be jest, Cousin Hugo, ’tis ill-jesting with a motherless and twice bereaved maiden ; if earnest, know that he who had my troth, hath it still ; he is lost to all, thrice lost to me, yet rather will I die his bedeswoman than live another's wife.’

There was no mistaking the low earnest tone, the expression of mingled anguish and resolve in her face. They appealed to the better feelings in Hugo's nature, and while he marvelled at her boldness in avowing constancy to a banned outcast, he felt poign-

antly for the moment the value of the heart that could never be his. He murmured, 'Forgive,' as he helped Rosamond to climb into the spedal-ship, then he re-entered the felucca, humbled and silenced. It had been ordered that he should accompany Sir Richard on some mission to a distant galley, Rosamond meanwhile being left to perform her errand of mercy, under the guardianship of the trusty old Simon, and two other servants of her father.

The marine hospital presented a melancholy spectacle, and to a modern eye, would have appeared rough and miserable to the last degree ; it was filled with patients of various nations, and as various ailments ; they lay or sat up, closely packed together in every vacant part of the vessel ; some were shivering with ague, others suffering from terrible boils, the treatment of which was then little understood ; others had received injuries in the performance of their nautical duties : all lay still and helpless, except when a sudden lurch of the vessel nearly rolled them over ; then a chorus arose of groans, or execrations, or cries to their respective patron saints for succour. Some few remained silent, bearing their miseries with unmoved stolidity, or with the true heroism of Christian patience. The heat was a terrible aggravation of these poor creatures' sufferings, and happiest were those who lay grouped under the shadow of the one broad sail.

Guided by grey-haired Simon, Rosamond found her way to Ivo's *couch*. Her spirit, rudely shaken

already by Hugo's importunities, was now painfully affected by the sights around her ; not that her nerves were as delicately strung as those of most high-born damsels now, for she had been used to hospital-work, and acquired more than average skill in surgery in the nunnery at Macclesfield ; moreover, persons afflicted with loathsome sores were then allowed to crawl abroad and exhibit themselves after a fashion which would not be tolerated now, so that even the humane were not easily shocked. But the sight of some hundred sufferers huddled together was new to her, and the tossing sea, lurid heat, and lack of fresh straw to lie upon, and fresh water to drink, made their misery more obvious. A certain number of the less able-bodied sailors took care of the sick, under the direction of six 'frères servans' of the Hospitalers. These men were distinguished by a black robe with a pointed cowl attached to it, and on the left side a cross of white linen, with eight points. Finding their numbers insufficient for such heavy duty, they had gladly accepted the proffered help of some Franciscan brethren, and several of these, men of foreign birth and aspect, were flitting about.

Ivo lay near the stern of the vessel, sheltered by its side from the hot glow of the western sky. A camlet cloak fell loosely round his wasted form, once remarkable for breadth and development of muscle. He was propped up against a heap of bucklers, kept on board for the use of the rowers in case of attack. *His chest heaved and panted, and the nerveless*

arm, once expert in archery, was stretched feebly towards a stone mug placed near him. Rosamond raised it to his lips, and he drained the tepid water which it contained to the last drop, and then uttered a sigh of disappointment.

‘Scant measure!’ he groaned, ‘scant measure! When I dwelt on Belyn bank, I lapped up the cold waters i’ harv’st time, and none stinted me!’

A hollow cough broke off this lamentation, and when it ceased, he laid his head back on the pillow. Rosamond hastily shook up for him, and remained still. He took no notice of her, and, indeed, the small amount of mental perception which nature had bestowed upon him appeared completely blunted. The sensation of heat and longing for fresh air and water absorbed his whole being. They gave an expression of distress to the pale blue and glazing eye, and a livid hue to the once broad, unmeaning but honest face. Rosamond could scarcely bear to see the change, and kneeling down, took a feather fan from her girdle, and gently waved it before him, hoping thus to bring back consciousness. It was evident life was waning, though the end might not be close at hand, and she longed for some recognition, some loving token to be conveyed to the widowed mother at home. ‘Poor Mabel,’ thought she, ‘heavy at best will the tidings be and keen the pang, but keener far and heavier, should Ivo die, and leave no word for her. Hist! he speaks! He thinks himself at home, and babbles of the meads

and whispering woods of Fallingbrome ; he deems himself now on Gausworth green, wrestling with his fellows for a pair of shoes ; now he waxes wroth, he will not be jeered at, he says ! no lubber he, but a true man and Cross-bearer ! Alack, poor Ivo ! how must his thick and lumpish brain be fevered to breed such phantasies as these. He stares on me ! I'll speak.'

Ivo did indeed stare, and tremble all over ; his emaciated frame felt the first shuddering movement in the good ship which ushered in a rude shock of wind and wave. At a sign from their mistress, Simon and one of the Fytton 'knaves' approached, and held up the sick youth in their arms while the buffet lasted. He groaned heavily, and looking towards Rosamond with something like intelligence in his eyes, murmured her name inquiringly.

'Dost know me, poor knave?' she asked. 'If thou dost, then drink this cordial of mine own mixing ; 'twill somewhat enhearten thee.'

No need of further pressing ; he eagerly gulped down the draught, which was compounded chiefly of mint, and left a sharp taste and icy coldness on his parched palate. 'Ah, 'tis a draught fit for Yarle Randle,' he muttered. 'Such an one has not crost my lips sin' I won the prize for quoits, i' the Gallow's Field'—the dim reminiscence set his mind wandering again. 'Ay, ay, I won the prize agin' them all ! and lank Symnel raved, and called me a clouted loon. If Childe Gawwyne had na' held me with a

grip of iron, I wou'd ha' felled him to the earth ! I wou'd.'

It seemed as though the low fever which consumed him had stirred up the scum and sediment of Ivo's sluggish nature. A consciousness of his mental deficiency, and of the derision which it had often exposed him to, had always haunted him, contrasting oddly with the pride he took in his bodily strength. In wrestling, and such other games as required brute force rather than skill, he almost always came off victorious. His defeated comrades revenged themselves by making a butt of him, and so he slunk away from them except on the arena of combat. Happily, his nature was not an expansive one, and so, in spite of their jeers and fleers life had glided smoothly with him. His mother loved and tended and fed him well, the last-named proof of her affection being by no means the least in his opinion ; and Mistress Rosamond, for Mabel's sake, had spread the wing of her protection over him. She interceded for him when he blundered, was patient when his slowness had wearied everyone else ; and when one day he broke a blood-vessel in the act of throwing an enormous stone, she saved his life by her prompt and wise leechcraft. At her request, his darling wish of joining the crusading host had been granted ; unhappily, for the last four months he had been separated from her train, and thrown amongst new and rough companions, and had found himself their laughing-stock. Thus the old soreness of spirit re-

turned, aggravated by growing and now hopeless disease. Ivo had become sullen and dogged, and the form his delirium took was but an exaggeration of his usual state of mind.

Rosamond looked upon him in sorrow and perplexity, but the white-haired Fytton retainer, who had no great love for the lad, heard his ravings with far other feelings.

‘How now, Sirrah,’ he said sternly, and laying a heavy hand on his arm, ‘darest thou prate thus before thy lord’s daughter? bethink thee straight, and answer Mistress Rosamond mannerly.’

Rosamond shook her head reproachfully at the old man, but he replied by a contemptuous glance towards Ivo whom the peremptory accents seemed to over-awe. He sank back, his eyes rolling fearfully round, till they encountered the blue and tearful eyes of his young mistress. The muttered words, ‘I wou’d fell Symnel to the earth, I wou’d,’ died away into an inaudible murmur, and he looked piteously up at her, and clasped his huge bony hands together.

‘Think not of Symnel, my poor varlet,’ she said soothingly, ‘he is a thousand miles away and more; think rather of thy mother, who prays for thee day and night; think of His dear grace whose liegeman thou art, whose land, the holy, glorious land lies before us; O Ivo, think of Him!’

Her voice, ‘like the sweet south that breathes upon a bank of violets,’ soothed Ivo’s frantic vehe-

mence for the moment. A clearer consciousness of his real state came upon him, and he lay silent, breathing hard. There was a pause ; Rosamond rose and leaned against the side of the vessel, dreamily listening to the sound of the waves which washed up close to Ivo's head. That sound, so joyous to young, free, bounding hearts, so welcome to thousands on board the fleet, whose weariness of the dead calm made them even hail a storm—that sound brought unwonted apprehension to the maiden's spirit. A foreboding of mischief came over her, a vague fear for her father, for the fleet, for the crusading cause, whose success, humanly speaking, was bound up with their safe and speedy arrival at Damietta. Rosamond vainly strove to drive the dark thoughts away, till Ivo's cough recalled to her things present. It was only the prelude to a violent paroxysm of coughing, which lasted long, and rent his frame to pieces.

‘I'm a dead man,’ he whispered, clutching at Rosamond's skirt in the extremity of his terror. ‘I shall ne'er see Jerusalem, nor that blessed land ! I shall be flung into the salt ooze, and the fishes shall feed on me !’

‘Ay, that hath been the burden of his song ever since we touched at Malta,’ muttered Simon ; ‘we would have left him there, but the spedal was choke-full, and not an Englishman in it—he is like one distracted when that fancy comes o'er him.’

Perhaps Ivo overheard the words, for he uttered a loud wail, and suddenly cast himself at Rosamond's

feet, sobbing out, 'Lady, lady, help me ! Sir Richard will never say thee nay ! Bid, therefore, that they lay me i' the turf, or under the smooth sea sand, not in yonder yawning deep, with snakes and slimy things, and grinning skulls !'

Simon came roughly to the rescue, and would have pushed Ivo back, had not the maiden interfered, bidding him 'stand off, and not vex the lad.'

Simon obeyed growling, and posted himself a few yards behind Ivo, who glared on him fiercely till he was out of sight. The delirious excitement was strong upon him, and mastered for the time the weakness of disease.

'Now lie down, good churl,' said Rosamond, in a tone between coaxing and command, 'lie down, and I will ponder thy request, whether or no it may be done.' So saying, she endeavoured to compose him on his rude couch, but he would sit still half upright, with strained eye-balls, and head resting on one emaciated and naked arm, waiting her decision.

She was perplexed ; the lad's days were evidently numbered, and well she knew that no isle or mainland was near. It was the practice on board the fleet to consign every corpse to the deep within an hour or two of decease, and the intense heat of the weather made the observance of this rule more stringent than ever. A moment's reflection, therefore, showed Rosamond that the thing Ivo wildly craved was scarcely possible. How should she break this *to him*, or reconcile his fevered brain to it ?

Here was the difficulty, for it did not so much as enter her mind to put him off with any dishonest evasion ; no, she must tell him the truth, trusting for help to calm him, and when her father returned, she would beseech Sir Richard to send some priest to watch over and comfort the dying boy. ‘I would not have thee leave this world, poor Ivo, unforgiving and unforgiven,’ thought she. ‘Serf though thou be, and in men’s eyes a fool, yet art thou dear to thy mother, ay, and to God who made thee.’

The orb of the sun was sinking in the west half veiled in dull red clouds. They shot upwards like the flames of a volcano, seen upon the distant horizon, and dimmed by the accompanying smoke ; their reflection cast a copper glow on the heaving waters, and on the glossy backs of a few seabirds which skimmed the waves. During the few moments which Rosamond gave to cogitation, (and they *were* few, for thought is a more rapid process than narration), she had unconsciously closed her eyes to shut out the glare. She re-opened them on perceiving that some dark object had come between her and it, and looking up, saw a figure clothed in the habit of the Friars Minors, standing erect near the helm. He was a man between thirty and forty, about the middle height, slight in form, and with delicately chiselled features. His complexion, originally clear olive, was of unearthly paleness. His black, dishevelled hair, tipped with untimely silver, streamed in the breeze, and his bushy eyebrows projected far beyond

the dark lamp-like eyes, giving a strange wild air to the whole face.

‘It is the Umbrian Cavalier,’ thought Rosamond. A thrill of awe shot through her, as she beheld the attenuated figure, whose outline stood out against the sky, as Giotto’s saints do against their golden backgrounds. He saw her not, his soul was wrapt in heavenward thought; in another moment he broke out into a hymn composed by himself, and still used by the brethren of his order. His rich melodious voice produced a quieting effect on Ivo, although the Italian words were, of course, wholly unintelligible to him. They ran thus :—

‘O Lord, exalted, all powerful, all gracious, Thine be laud and praise, honour and blessing! Mortal man is not worthy so much as to utter Thy Name! Praised be Thou for Thy whole creation, specially for our illustrious brother, the Sun, by whose light we serve Thee; he is beautiful and bright, an emblem, O Lord, of Thee!

‘Praised be my Lord for our sister, the Moon, and all the stars, which declare the glory of God!

‘Praised be my Lord for our brethren, the Winds, for breezes and clouds, for storms and calms, whereby the order of this world is sustained.

‘Praised be my Lord for our sisters, the Waters, which are lowly, and helpful, and pure.

‘Praised be my Lord, for our brother, the Fire, by whom the night is enlightened; he is jocund, and masterful, and strong!

‘Praised be my Lord for the Earth, my Mother, which feedeth us, and rejoiceth us, and bringeth forth divers fruits, and gaudy flowers, and herbs of grace!

‘Praised be my Lord for all such as forgive their enemies, and suffer patiently for love of Him! They are blessed, for *the Most High* shall give them the Crown of Life.’

Francesco was interrupted while reciting this 'strange catalogue of his kindred' by the voice of Ivo. The lad's half delirious importunity returned, and seizing both Rosamond's hands in his, he reiterated his shrill cry of 'Lady, lady, help ! Keep me from the pit, from yonder leaping waves that ope their jaws to snatch me !'

Reasoning would have been vain at any time with that dense and superstitious mind, so Rosamond applied herself to soothing it. 'Ivo,' she answered, 'the waves will not hear *me*, but God made them, and Him they will hear ; fold thine hands now—thus,' and she laid his broad palms together, he obeying like a little child, 'and say with me the one prayer thou knowest.'

She kneeled beside him, as a mother by her forward boy, and repeated in a low voice,

'Oure Fader in Heven reich,
Thy Name be hallowed everlich,
Thou bringe us to Thy michel bliss.'*

Ivo uttered the prescribed words, but in a perturbed and fitful voice ; the heaving of his broad chest, and sundry strange contortions of his features, showed that good and evil were struggling within ; the citadel of his conscience had been so long possessed by ignorance and superstition, that those dark spirits seemed the more likely to prevail.

* This version of the Lord's Prayer was in general use in England through the 12th and following centuries.

Rosamond watched the strife, but not alone ; Francis of Assisi, hearing Ivo's last outburst, had looked that way ; with the marvellous sagacity which tempered his wildest flights of fancy, he divined from her countenance and the boy's tones and gestures, something of the true state of the case ; he drew nigh with bare and noiseless feet, ready to aid the sufferer, if aid were required, and perceiving on his nearer approach that the two were English, he beckoned to him another Minorite who was conversant with the northern tongues.

When Rosamond looked up and saw the Umbrian stranger at her side, she shrank at first from his uncouth appearance. His forehead was marked with deep lines and furrows, and a deathlike pallor overspread his face and thin hands. The deep-set eyes gleamed like meteors upon her, and seemed to read her soul. She turned away a moment, then by a secret attraction looked again and saw in them such a depth of expression, such holiness and heavenly pity, as she had never beheld on mortal face before.

It was that same attraction which, in a lower degree, drew even the birds and beasts around Francis of Assisi. Doves fluttered to him and nestled in his bosom ; lambs licked his hand ; half-frozen bees crawled to him in winter to be fed ; the starlings were his 'little brothers,' the larks his 'sisters,' soaring towards Heaven ! And for human beings, how boundless were his sympathies ! how *active, tender,* and wise his exertions ! how bitter

the tears he shed for obstinate sinners ! how angelic the joy he felt for repentant ones ! Who that reads his acts and meditations, can wonder that many were found willing to forsake all, that they might live and die with him ?

Francis bent down to the sick boy, kissed his clammy brow, and laid the unresisting head on his breast. By a solemn gesture with his hand, he withdrew Ivo's shuddering gaze from the sea, now working fiercely, and gently, gradually raised it up towards one clear soft spot in the sky. The silent appeal of that out-stretched hand, the warning fatherly look which accompanied it, seemed to be understood by Ivo, for the words, 'Bring us to Thy michel bliss,' broke from his lips a second time, and now not grudgingly but unbidden.

The dark spirit was yielding, and Francesco signed to Rosamond to resume the Lord's Prayer ; but the dying boy outstripped her, repeating in sonorous tones as once at his mother's knee,

' Als in Hevene they do,
Ever in earth be it also ;
That holy bread that lasteth aye,
Thou sende us this ilke day !
Forgi'e us a' that we ha' done,
As we _____,'

Here he broke off, the honest though stupid mind revolting from uttering untruth before God. 'Lank Symnel,' he groaned forth, ' 'tis a hard matter to forgi'e him—oh, tell me how to forgi'e lest I go hence unblest.'

The second Minorite, a grave and distinguished-looking person, understood Ivo's words, and conveyed their sense to his superior. Francesco drew forth an ivory cross from his breast, kissed it fervently, and held it up before the dying boy.

‘My sister,’ said he, addressing Rosamond, in the soft Provençal idiom, ‘tell him of the Love that bore all, forgave all, for us men and for our salvation.’

Rosamond obeyed, first calling to mind such passages from the Gospels as bore on that sacred theme, then rendering them into few and homely English words. She recited low but earnestly, for the pardon of injuries was a precept she had had much need to ponder upon. Often had her spirit revolted from it, and been subdued only by efforts and prayer of which her confessor knew nothing. Even now that her wrongs and griefs were no longer fresh, the struggle in her mind was easily re-awakened by some chance word or trivial occurrence ; she could therefore feel with, as well as for the poor serf, in his troubles of mind, and teach him, not with the air of a monitress, but with the lowly earnestness of one who like himself had erred and suffered.

Ivo perhaps felt this ; he gazed and listened after his stolid fashion, then raising himself on his elbow gasped out with a ghastly smile, ‘I ha’ a silver-tipt arrow, Childe Gawayne’s gift ; I won it, ’twas two year last Martinmas ; it lies wrapped in a cloth at the bottom of our corn-bin ; lady, I pray you, bid *my mother* give it Symnel for a token of good will :

and bid Symnel keep it, and be good to my mother.' A glow irradiated Ivo's haggard features as he spoke these words and then sank back, mind and body exhausted by this great effort ; the Umbrian pressed him in his arms, tears of devout thankfulness glittering in his lustrous eyes. By his desire Rosamond uttered the closing petition of the Divine Prayer :—

‘ As we forgive each other one ;
He let us falle in no sinning,
But shield us fro’ the foule thing ;’

then she drew back, while Francesco (by virtue of a permission recently granted to his order), pronounced Absolution over the penitent.

Sir Richard's felucca was now in sight, and the time of Rosamond's attendance on the Countess drew near, so she knew she must not linger. Yet it grieved her to turn away from the poor boy, whose image, though rude and ungainly, was endeared by associations with all her joyous days. Moreover, she could not bear to leave him to the rude tendance of Simon, whom Sir Richard, in default of a better nurse, had appointed to keep watch by him that night. She was revolving these thoughts in her mind when Francesco, with his peculiar quickness of perception, divined and at once relieved them. ‘ Sister,’ he said, ‘ rest content that your poor countryman shall be cared for ; brother Angelo, who knoweth something of your island tongue, will look to him during the days or hours that remain of his mortal pilgrimage, and minister gladly to the *needs of body and spirit.*’

‘O comfortable Friar,’ replied the maiden reverently, ‘how can a stranger thank thee for this charity?’

Francis shook his head; ‘No thanks are due,’ he said, ‘from one sinner to another; all praise ascend to Him who alone is worthy!’

Rosamond now committed to brother Angelo the cordial of which she had administered one draught to Ivo. She was turning to depart, when the boy who had seemed to be dozing, woke up with a momentary shudder. ‘Jerusalem,’ he cried, as many a dying pilgrim had done before him, ‘O Jerusalem, shall I never see thee?’

‘My son,’ replied Friar Angelo, solemnly, ‘thou art not far from that heavenly City, her gates stand open to all believers; believe, therefore, and thou shalt enter there.’

The terror passed away, and gladness followed, the gladness of an ignorant but trusting heart, which, through God’s good Providence, found itself in wise and holy guidance. The passionate pilgrim-longings which could not be quenched, were now directed to their true end. Ivo looked up towards the sky, growing indistinct to his glazing eye; then he stretched out both hands to Rosamond, whose white mantle glimmered before him. ‘The gates stand open,’ he cried, a feverish glow kindling in eye and cheek, ‘O Lady, come, bid Childe Gawyne come! he ever said I should be his henchman i’ the Holy Land, hath he forgot?’ but, ‘Na! na!’ he continued,

sinking his voice to a whisper, 'tis *I* forgot ! they called him a banned and outcast man. Banned, said they ? then let me go to him. Better be banned with him, than blest with them !'

The brief frenzy spent itself in these words, and Ivo ceased for lack of breath. 'Of whom speaks he, my sister ?' Francesco inquired, seeking a clue whereby to recall the wandering mind. Receiving no answer he turned and saw her with head bent down in the very attitude of humiliation and anguish. Her hands were tightly clasped over her eyes, concealing all but the white forehead which was contracted by sudden pain. But it was not in her nature to give way for long. She strove for calmness, and presently answered, without looking up, 'You ask of whom he speaks—of one, gentle and true, nurtured in the fear of God by a holy mother—one whose heart's desire from boyhood was to have been a Cross-bearer in this war—to live, if need were, to die Christ's unstained pilgrim. But (oh grief to tell) his mother died—died through the savage treachery of a false baron, foe of their house. He, this young gentleman, in the first ecstasy of his sorrow, sought that false baron out, and slew him in sanctuary.'

Fra Angelo recoiled involuntarily as the last words were pronounced, but Francis of Assisi did not ; he remained fixed in earnest attention, while a deep sigh gave unconscious proof of the sympathy that stirred within him.

‘Therefore,’ proceeded Rosamond, ‘is he a wanderer like Cain on the face of the earth, rejected of God and man, spurned by all, save by this poor varlet and by me.’

She ceased, overpowered with grief and shame, and not daring to raise her eyes towards the ascetic, the remembrance of whose severe sanctity rushed suddenly to her memory. No sooner were her words uttered, than she trembled at their boldness ; she marvelled how the subject, so long pent up in her heart, had found utterance ; a cold fear seized her lest Francesco’s next words should confirm the Church’s ban, and quench her last lingering hope.

He spoke at last. ‘Sister,’ he asked, ‘by what name may we pray for this lost sheep? and where may he be sought?’ Who can describe the happy thrill which ran through Rosamond’s frame as she heard these words, or the tone of ineffable compassion in which Francesco uttered them ?

‘They call him Tristan, now,’ she replied, ‘whether he yet live I know not, dare not seek to know. O holy Friar, should such an one cross thy path in the far east (haply he might), look gently on him, as now thou dost on me.’

Tears choked her utterance. They flowed still more freely as she heard the Umbrian, forgetful of her presence, murmur with uplifted eyes : ‘Thou joyest in miracles of love ; grant to me, or to some holier child of Thine, that we may find this lost and sullied piece of silver, and render it back to Thy

treasury ; so will we laud and bless Thee evermore,'

The prayer bore to her mind the aspect of prophecy, and recurred to it with comfort in after days of hardship and trial. Sir Richard was now at her side, and after brief parlance with the Minorite, bade his daughter return with him to the countess's galley. But an event, as fearful as unexpected, was now close at hand, and changed in a moment the whole current of their destinies.

CHAPTER IV.

‘The yeasty waves confound,
And swallow navigation up.’

WE said in our last chapter that Sir Richard Fytton and his daughter prepared to return to the ladies’ galley. Night closed in, however, and they had not reached it. The Lady Clémence could not divest herself of some uneasiness on their account, and Earl Randle, to whom she expressed her fears, shared them, though in a less degree.

‘Saw you not,’ he said, ‘how at moon-rise or what should have been such, a marvellous hot mist fell smothering over the fleet? I noted that it was thickest in the quarter of the spedal-ship, and a crackling sound as of thunder came with it. I strained mine eyes in that direction, but saw nothing by reason of the fog, and of the grove of masts betwixt our squadron and the Genoese; now arises a whiffing wind, which, if it bate not, will blow our ships far and wide this night.’

‘Then, kind heart,’ rejoined the Countess, ‘stay aboard with us, an’ thou lovest me, till this hurly-

burly be over, for our master-pilot, a vapouring fellow from Naples, has lost heart and head already, and cries lustily on Saint Januarius to take the helm.'

'I did so purpose, and have ordered accordingly,' replied the Earl.

The doings of this doughty warrior on that night, are best told in the words of the chronicler, Henry Archdeacon of Huntingdon—'There hap'ning a dreadful storm, he asked the mariners "How long it was then to midnight?" and they told him "it was almost two hours;" said he then "Labour till that time, and I trust to God the tempest will cease." But when midnight approached, the tempest increased so much, that the master of the ship bade him commend himself to God, for they were all like to perish; whereupon he went out of his cabin, and stoutly assisting them the tempest soon assuaged. The day following, therefore, when the seas were calm and the danger clearly over, the master asked him, "why he would not stir to assist them till midnight?" telling him "that his help was then more than all the mariners in the ship." Quoth he "because my monks, and other devout people of mine, and mine ancestors' foundation, did then rise to sing divine service; for that reason, therefore, did I put confidence in their prayers, and therefore my hope was, that God Almighty would give me such strength as I had not before, and assuage the tempest."

When morning broke, there was a freshness in the air, the like of which, for many days, our northern pilgrims had not enjoyed. The waves still ran high, but all danger for the present was manifestly over. The ladies resumed their places on deck, pale but cheerful ; indeed the return to security after such frightful danger, produced in several of them an elation of spirits that was almost unseemly under the circumstances.

‘ Nods and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Quips and cranks, and jocund wiles,’

succeeded to a dark night of fear and suspense, and the merriment became noisy, when Messer Tholomieu crawled forth from an obscure lurking-place under the hatches, where he had lain all night, the victim alternately of terror or of sea-sickness. He still presented a countenance, at once rueful and ludicrous ; rueful, from its sallowness, and from the unusual heaviness of the shrewd, twinkling eye ; ludicrous from the yellow hood, surmounted by a cock’s head and neck, which enveloped it. A yellow cloak was wrapped round him, partly concealing his fool’s coat, to the skirts and elbows of which were attached jingling bells, that made ‘ music wherever he went.’ The sword of lath at his side,* peeped out, however, and so did the bright coloured hose, one scarlet, one yellow, which fitted tight to his legs. The ‘ bauble,’ or

* The sword of lath, worn by fools, wherewith to fight the evil one.— *Fosbroke’s Dictionary of Antiquities*.

short stick with a fool's head carved at the top, was in his hand, not wielded jauntily as usual, but drooping and almost reversed.

Though Sir Tholomieu's usual aim and vocation was to provoke laughter, he by no means relished the mirth which his forlorn appearance now produced, and muttered with an irritable gleam in his watery eye, 'Quoiffe de Marie! they make merry on the poor fool, but they shall find it no pleasant jest, sporting with edged tools!'

The Lady Clémence, who had looked with more commiseration than mirth on her fool's plight, now ordered that food should be set before him, and his spirits rose rapidly as he partook of buffalo steaks from the Pontine marshes, and spiced wine of Sicily. After quaffing a third draught of the latter, to the health of his patroness, he felt himself once more a man and a Gascon. 'Gramercie, lady,' he said, setting down the empty goblet, 'you are ever courteous and motherly to your poor servitor, nor is he the fool thankless, some young and empty-pated gallants take him for ; in sooth, I question whether e'er a man on board the fleet did such good service as he last night!'

'How now, bragging varlet!' exclaimed the countess, 'make good that boast, or I'll have thee whipt by my seneschal ; methought thou wast stowed away like lumber, betwixt the keelson and the deck, from set till rise of sun.'

‘And so I was,’ answered Tholomieu, unabashed, ‘I am no boaster, I, to gainsay it ; there, gazing upward through a chink, I saw the racking vapours rush along, spurred by the tempest ; strange gibber-voices came forth from amongst them, wailings and shrieks as of vexed ghosts, and lo, the cross blue lightnings for a moment laid bare that inky cloud ; and overhead I saw a cluster of hideous faces, peering downward. I quailed, but anon, plucking up heart of grace, brandished my lathen sword, and cried, “Whence are ye, ugly fiends, and what black errand brings ye here ?” “We wait for the soul of Count Randle ;” made answer one, chief and foulest of the band, “from our prison in the sea-caves of Brittany we come, and wait to bear him thither.” “Then shall ye wait for ever,” quoth I ; “do but touch a hair of his head, and the great dogs of Lincoln Abbey, and of Chester, ay, and of Dieulacrês, shall bark so loud, that ye shall be fain to let him go.” Then fled they howling, and methought the storm began to lull. Thus the poor jester did his lord some service.’

‘Nor shall he lack his reward,’ said the Lady Clémence, who had listened with implicit belief to Tholomieu’s recital. ‘Take these, fool,’ she added, dropping five silver marks into his palm. ‘they should have been ten, had I not vowed to Saint Nicholas of Vannes a ship of wrought silver, the length of a cloth-yard shaft, cunningly graven ; this offering did I pledge myself to make in the very

height of the storm, and should it cost my coronet, it shall be paid.'

The jester bowed, and retreated from that courtly circle, his mistress averring that she had no heart for tale or song, while ignorant of the fate of so many gallant ships and brave gentlemen. 'Ay, and of pretty Rosamond Fytton too,' she added, with a sigh, which was echoed with sincerity from many a bosom there. The suspense, with respect to the main body of the fleet, lasted several hours; at length, Earl Randle who had quitted the ladies' galley so soon as danger was over, sent tidings that all were safe, except a carrack from Spain which had disappeared, and the spedal-ship which had been dismasted and shattered, and lay like a log on the water. Most of her crew and passengers had been saved, but amongst these were neither the Fyttons, nor the Minorite Angelo of Pisa. Dark fears were therefore entertained for their safety.

The persons rescued from that sinking vessel were dispersed through the fleet, and three of them were by Earl Randle quartered in the Countess's galley. Hugo Fitzwarin was one of these, but he arrived in a state of such utter exhaustion as to be incapable of recounting the occurrences of the previous evening and night. The stimulants poured down his throat produced a rapid transition to fever and wild incoherent talk; towards evening however, he grew calmer, and able to recal and relate the disastrous history.

‘I do remember,’ he said, ‘that I tarried in our felucca, while the knight of Fytton went aboard the spedal-ship to fetch his daughter. In those few moments, I and the rowers by signs rather than by speech, compared our apprehensions of foul weather at hand. We noted the thick vapour which, like a curtain, was drawn betwixt us and the fleet, and we shook our heads at the laggard speed of the doomed spedal-ship, now in the rear of all. Of a sudden, the sea began to seethe and foam in a strange fashion, and perchance two bow shots from us in the south, its waters boiled and rose into a heap, with a rumbling noise. The mariners beholding this, cast themselves down on their faces, with groans and distracted gestures. My blood grew chill, yet could not I turn mine eye from that spectacle. The hill of foam rose higher and higher, as though seeking to reach the inky cloud above ; that, again, stooped to meet it, and speedily they joined like a column of clear glass, dark at the sides, but bright in the middle, or one might liken the appearance to a crystal trumpet thrust up from the deep by some spirit of the storm ; it moved towards us in most majestic guise, now upright, now seeming to incline to the right hand or the left ; its top was lost in the cloud ! Before one could pater a prayer, this fearful death was upon us, or rather we seemed to be sucked into it. I remember a great cry from the ship, then floods of waters overwhelmed me, and sight, hearing, and sense forsook me.’

‘And the Fyttons?’ interposed the Countess.

Hugo’s agitation was extreme. ‘Oh, heavens!’ he cried, ‘give but one twig, one straw to which hope may cling, the hope that yet they live! I saw her standing by the helm which her noble father had taken from the scared steersman; the taller Minorite was with them, and his lips moved as in exhortation. So met they that fierce deluge. I saw no more, and know not whether hours or instants passed, before I woke again; painfully and drop by drop the life-blood seemed to ebb back from my overcharged breast. I could hear those who tended me say one to another, “the spedal-ship is going down, her poop and such as clung to it are swept away, her mast is gone; scarce dare the boats draw near to pick off the wailing crew.” Sick they were, most of them, and helpless, yet more loth to forego the dregs of life, than many a man whose cup of youth brims over, is to see that cup dashed from his hand! It must not be concealed that the hot-headed Umbrian friar did good service in stilling their cries and lowering them into the boats.’

This was all that could be learnt respecting the tragical adventure of the spedal-ship. It was clear that the agent of her destruction had been a waterspout, that most sublime and terrible of the phenomena witnessed by those who ‘see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.’ During three days her fate was the theme of discourse on board every vessel in the fleet, and special services on be-

half of her missing passengers were solemnized ; then by degrees, the wonder died away, and other subjects became more prominent. About the middle of September, the fleet once more separated, a small part escorting the Countesses of Chester and Arundel and other high-born dames to Acre, the rest making for Damietta, which they reached safely.

CHAPTER V.

‘And dost thou ask what secret woe
I bear, corroding joy and youth?’—*Byron*.

WHAT a scene of confusion did the crusading army now present! Cardinal Pelagio openly claimed the supreme command hitherto awarded to the King of Jerusalem; he maintained that Europe had taken up arms at the call of the Pope, and that to his delegate only was the obedience of her troops due, and chose to ignore the parting injunction laid upon him by Honorius III., which ran thus: ‘Be thou a pattern of lowliness to the host of God, cherish concord, and bring back to a spirit of peace such as have erred from it.’ ‘The confusion of the camp of Agramante,’ says a biographer of Francesco d’Assisi, ‘was but a feeble image of that which Francis found in the host of the titular king of Jerusalem, John of Brienne; cavaliers and footmen, all emulous of fame, all impatient of obedience, all insisting on being led into action, all interchanging bitter contumelies, and all willing to cut each other’s throats, if no better employment could be found for their swords.’ From

this sweeping censure we may perhaps except the veteran king himself, and the truly chivalrous Duke Leopold. These brave men soared above selfish aims and quarrels, but their spirits were embittered by witnessing so much folly and baseness, and by the continual struggle in their minds between allegiance to the Church, and hatred of her representative, the Cardinal.

The arrival of a fresh European force was at first hailed as the dawn of better things ; but, alas ! the first council of war held after their landing, laid bare to Earl Randle and his compeers, the true and hopeless nature of the obstacles which they had to contend with. A powerful faction in the camp proposed an instant attack on Damietta, as the only way of averting a general mutiny. Cardinal Pelagio sanctioned this scheme, and threw the whole weight of his authority into it. A few prudent voices were uplifted against it, but were silenced at once by a threat of excommunication. Then arose Francis of Assisi, to whom Pope Honorius's commission had given a place in council ; 'like another Micaiah, he foretold the disastrous results of a combat, about to be waged under the shelter of holy names, but in the wanton insolence of human passion.' These words of truth and soberness fell like cooling dew on many hearts, but in that of the legate, they woke only bitter jealousy and alarm, lest his power should be undermined by this new and unconscious rival. So *Pelagio* urged on the attack more strenuously than

before ; it took place that night ; the Christians advancing with infinite bravery but little prudence, were repulsed and fled to their tents, leaving six thousand dead under the walls of Damietta.

Henry of Huntingdon records that in this, and every succeeding attack on that devoted town, Earl Randle ‘did glorious things.’* True crusading zeal enabled him to restrain his burning indignation against Pelagio within some bounds, but the prelate’s arrogance made a deep impression on his mind ; it probably led to that determined resistance of Papal encroachment which characterized Earl Randle in later life, and drew upon him the thunders of the Roman See.

To return to the camp. In this day of sorrow and rebuke,

‘ When human strength to weakness turned,
And courage to despair,’

Francis of Assisi showed himself possessed of a truer courage. After passing many hours on his knees, absorbed in prayer, he rose, called his brethren to arms, and led on an attack, which, in no slight degree, restored the ‘prestige’ of the Christian name. He proved himself a bold warrior and strategist, yet maintained his sacred character, chanting as he went forth, ‘Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art

* Ubi dux Christianæ Cohortis præstitit gloriosa.

Monast. Anglic. p. 890.

with me.' This, and other exploits of the Umbrian cavalier, made him a name in both camps, and paved the way for the enterprize which had brought him to Damietta, that of preaching Christianity to the Sultan himself.

This prince, whom the annalists of that day commonly call Mel-edîn,* had, as we have seen, recently lost his father, the renowned Malek-Adel. The first weeks of mourning had been spent by him in his citadel at Cairo, a grim edifice, built by his uncle Saladin, with the stones of a neighbouring pyramid. Tidings of import, from the more distant provinces of his realm, ruled over by his fourteen brothers, soon however roused him from inaction, and made him fear for the safety of his throne. He caused himself to be proclaimed a second time Soldan of Egypt, and 'sword of God, and His prophet.' He gave orders for public rejoicings in Cairo, and came forth from his seclusion to witness the illuminations with which his accession was celebrated ; early the next morning, he suddenly and as secretly as might be, took his departure for the Saracen camp, pitched some miles to the south of Damietta.

The eastern sky was red with the light of dawn ; it lit up the brown and slowly moving waters of Nile, and the countless minarets of the capital, embosomed in groves of sycamore and palm. It glowed faintly on the citadel, which stood (and yet stands)

* Or, 'the perfect King.'

on a low ridge of rocky hills, east of the town. Each battlement and gateway was at that time fringed with gory heads, those of Christian warriors taken at Damietta. A brown line of desert stretched eastward ; to the west lay a green plain, sweeping from the river banks nearly to the foot of the African hills. In this direction, the strange and awful outline of a group of pyramids stood out against the horizon, looking in their gloomy massiveness, like mountains cut down to that shape.

The sallow Caireens watched with unusual interest the large cavalcade descending from the citadel to the plain, and proceeding rapidly northward over the shining, gravelly sand. It was evident that no less a person than their new Soldan was there ; but like his father Malek-Adel, he affected much state and privacy. ‘ His palace,’ says the chronicler, ‘ was a sanctuary, which none could approach ;’ his form and features, both of which inherited some of the majestic grace of his uncle Saladin, were never beheld except on high solemnities : and now, in his character of ‘ King of kings, and favourite of Heaven,’ he rode alone, the crowd of tributary emirs keeping at a respectful distance behind him. His guard was composed of some hundreds of young Turcomans, who had been taken captive in boyhood and carefully trained to arms. They were a fine body of men, slight but strong, with fair complexions, small piercing eyes, and scanty light brown hair almost hidden by their lambskin caps. They were equipped

with bow and arrows, glittering falchions and a heavy lance, the head of which was taken off or put on as occasion might require. Their horses were of the Turcoman breed, richly caparisoned, but more serviceable than showy, strong and fleet and calculated for hard work and hard fare. Each horseman carried behind him a small bag of corn for his steed, and an iron peg to which was affixed a rope, terminating in a noose, with which he might picket the animal at each halting place. This corps rode on, but not with the silence and order of European cavalry; ever and anon, one or other would start from the ranks, spurring his horse with the sharp edge of his shovel-shaped stirrup. With wonderful precision he would describe a circle on the sand, letting fly a shaft at some soaring bird, and rarely, if ever missing it. His success elicited wild cries and shouts from his comrades. This turbulent corps, apparently so free in their movements, were incessantly reminded of their origin, by the epithet of 'Mameluke,' or slave. Hossein Bey, the leader who now headed them, had nothing of the Turcoman in his appearance or accent; at first sight, the Caireens marvelled that such an one should have been chosen to fill a warlike post of such trust; his figure was attenuated, his chest narrow, his features yellow and wrinkled. His age could not exceed forty, yet was he bent and round-shouldered, and the fingers which grasped his bridle appeared misshapen. Nevertheless their grasp was

firm, and when from time to time, he raised his deep, sunken eyes to take a survey of his band, there was that in their expression which caused men to quail.

Hossein Bey was known to possess the confidence of Mel-edîn, and to enjoy nearer and more frequent access to his person, than any other courtier. Therefore was he courted and feared, wooed and hated, by all aspirants to the royal favour ; but of his origin, his aims, and his creed, men knew nothing.

The cavalcade pursued its way in a north-easterly direction, refreshed by a gentle air from the river, and by the sight of fields green with clover. But when noon approached and a hot film began to quiver over the far-stretched sands east of Heliopolis, the order for a halt was given. With magical speed, the Soldan's servants pitched that memorable tent which Mel-edîn afterwards gave to the Emperor of Germany ; the cost of it exceeded a hundred thousand crowns, and the interior represented a kind of concave celestial globe where the movements of the planets, the respective position of earth and sun, and the hour of the day, were accurately pointed out. It took but a few moments, as we have said, to rear this moveable palace, the Soldan's chief tent-pitcher, a muscular Arab, holding the centre pole, while his underlings drove in the pegs and disposed the curtains. A cool mat was spread over the fine sand within the tent, shawl-quilts were piled near its centre for the imperial repose, and two chamberlains attended to disrobe their master. Two

more brought in the light noonday refection, consisting of flat cakes baked on small iron plates, and fragrant conserves of orange and apricot. These were soon despatched, for Mel-edîn, like the other princes of the Ayoubite race, was frugal and temperate in his habits. He dismissed his attendants, who however remained within call, and kept near him only a fair, delicate-featured slave, a boy of eleven years or thereabouts. This child knelt before him, and offered him, after first tasting it, a golden goblet full of sparkling water, purified by some chemical process.

‘Drink, dread king,’ he said, or rather chanted, in a sweet treble voice, ‘drink of the bowl thy servant tenders thee ; its contents are bright as liquid diamonds, cold as the spring created by Ali himself, pure as the sacred well of Zem-Zem or the river which waters Paradise ; drink of the bowl that leaves no after head-ache (unlike the ruby wine, which sparkles but to ensnare), and listen meanwhile to the praises of thy ancestors, chanted by my feeble voice.’

Apparently, the little slave was a privileged person, for the Soldan smiled and stroked his cheek, as he quaffed the much extolled water.

‘Not now, my Bul-bul,’ he answered ; ‘sweet are the notes of thy lute and sweet the praises of Ayoub’s race to mine ear, yet music may not seal the mouth of wisdom, nor melody arrest the feet of discretion ; go, therefore, and send Hossein Bey to *me* forthwith.’

The Bul-bul obeyed, and in a few minutes Hossein appeared, bearing sundry scrolls and despatches for his master's inspection. The brow of Mel-edîn resumed its usual expression of gravity, as he languidly discussed these documents with his minister. From their tenor, it was clear that discord and rebellion were rife in his own camp, and that the emirs who had submitted implicitly to his father's vigorous sway, would fain take advantage of Mâlek-Adel's death to recover their independence. The most troublesome of these was a Kurdish chief, named Emadedîn, a man advanced in years, and versed in all the forms of oriental treachery. He had played a principal, though not a conspicuous part, in every revolution in Egypt or Syria for the last five-and-twenty years ; like his fathers before him, he delighted in war and revolt, despised the arts of peace, and spurned all hereditary rule. Fortune, who is said to favour the bold and unscrupulous, had hitherto shone upon this adventurer, and elated by her smiles, he was now hatching a plot for dethroning Mel-êdin, and giving the empire to one of his younger brothers. Some indications of this plot had been detected by Hossein Bey, whose keen eye was further sharpened by jealousy of the emir, and he now laid them before the Soldan, who listened with roused attention. Encouraged by this, Hossein proceeded to advise the instant arrest of the supposed traitor. ' Bid me, O monarch,' he said, ' bring to thy presence this son of a Kurdish dog, wreathed in

fetters ; as the hot wind dries the marrow of the bone, so do his whispers the fidelity of his brother emirs ; speak, () monarch, and the shoe of my heart, inflamed in the fire of zeal, shall bear me to perform thy bidding.'

But the Bey overshot his mark. Mel-edîn had much of his famous uncle's keenness of perception, though he possessed little or none of his prompt decision in acting. In many instances, this infirmity of purpose had caused him to surrender himself into his artful adviser's hands, but here the Bey's selfish aims were too palpable, and his master shrank from becoming his tool. 'Stay thine hand awhile,' the Soldan replied, 'the wise archer draws not his bow, till the arrow be fitted to the string.' These words were accompanied by a gesture of his hand towards the tent-door, signifying dismissal. Hossein reluctantly obeyed, and as he did so, distant shouts and cries from the Mameluke guard arrested the attention of his master, who was already composing himself to rest.

'What mean these uncouth sounds ?' exclaimed the Soldan, ill pleased ; 'Go, Hossein, and frown into silence the rude children of Turkistan ; but first, bid my Bul-bul attend me here.'

The command was obeyed, and after some moments of unusual delay, the little slave glided in, his soft cheek flushed, and his eyes sparkling with excitement. He prostrated himself, and kissed the earth, the usual form of salutation exacted by the *Ayoubite princes*.

‘Why so tardy in obeying my summons, O child of unknown parents?’ asked Mel-edîn, but rather caressingly than sternly, ‘and wherefore gleams thine eye with unwonted fire? Speak on, for sleep is far from me, and I would fain drive away the thoughts of bitterness which hinder her approach.’

This was no unusual mood of mind with the Soldan, and his gentle slave knew how to deal with it. ‘O king,’ he replied, still kneeling, ‘may my words refresh thine ear, as the morning breeze doth the mighty boughs of the terebinth! Thy servant did but stray forth to watch from afar the games of the Mamelukes; I sate me down under an obelisk, one of four that stand yonder, where the yellow sand-heaps of the wilderness break upon this green and watered valley of Nile.’

With one arm he raised the curtain which served as door to the tent, disclosing to view sundry earthen mounds thinly scattered with ruins, and a pool overhung with willows, and bordered by water-plants. The obelisk, which Mel-edîn’s young favourite pointed out, rose a little way off, in company with another, only the base of which remained. Neither the slave nor his royal master knew how deep and solemn an interest attached to the spot whereon Mel-edîn’s eye coldly rested. There was the ‘spring of the Sun,’ there, his temple, of which one high-priest had been father-in-law to the patriarch Joseph, another had initiated Moses into all the ‘wisdom of the Egyptians.’ That obelisk, the oldest known

in the world, stood four thousand years ago, in front of the temple of the Sun. It retained and still retains the position it occupied in the days of the Pharaohs, while its three fellows have been carried away to the modern capital of priestly Rome.

‘From yonder mound,’ continued the boy, ‘thy servant viewed, with not unenvious eye, the game of the dart ; the bold Mamelukes careered by, throwing at one another the long and slender djureed,* while at full gallop. My heart bounded to see them catch it in their hands, or avoid its blow by diving for a moment under their fiery steeds. Eager to see more, I strayed on till I reached a very ancient fig-tree, held sacred by the Christians ; under its huge and gnarled trunk, I found an aged woman, crouching and trembling for fear of the Mameluke warriors. She turned her withered face towards me, and lo, its swarthy hue, and the grisly and woolly locks which half concealed it, showed her to be a daughter of the abject Coptic race. She joined her feeble hands, and prayed me, in broken Arabic, not to betray her lurking place. “My people are all fled,” she said ; “at the first sound of your horses’ hoofs, they arose and departed leaving us alone ; by the Holy Child, who once rested under these boughs in his weary flight into Egypt, I conjure thee, betray us not.” At these words my curiosity was aroused. I looked again, and lo, at the aged woman’s feet, under an arching root of the old tree, I beheld the form of a man,

* A dart three cubits long.

lying on the ground. She had spread her ragged mantle over him, and built a little screen of boughs, to keep the sun's rays from his head ; his face I saw not, for it was turned away. "Hist," she said, "he sleeps for the first time after strong fever ; on that sleep may hang life or death, therefore disturb him not." Then I perceived that not palsied age, but love and faithfulness had chained her aged feet to that spot, and my heart was moved with pity towards the unsightly hag !' The boy paused, with a choking sensation in his throat ; his master glanced languidly towards him, and observed, with a smile, that tears dimmed the large blue eyes.

'They add fresh beauty to thy face,' he said, complacently, 'as dew-drops deepen the hue of the violet ; nevertheless, my son, restrain them, for what saith the poet ? "Scarcely shall he enjoy the garden of existence, who stays to pluck the thorn from the feet of his fellow-traveller ;" and now proceed, for thy tale is soothing.'

'I stole away from that spot,' resumed the favourite, 'but, alas ! too late ; a flinty-hearted Mameluke had espied the woman, and in his cruel sport, rode up, dart in hand, to the foot of the tree. "Brothers," he cried, "behold a Nazarene at her prayers, a loathly daughter of the abject Copt. Satan himself is not blacker of hue ; what fitter mark for our darts than those accursed beads which she grasps so tight ; by the beard of the prophet, this djureed shall cut the string which holds them !" His brothers laughed

loud at the jest, and when I prayed him to forbear, he chode me for a spoilt minion, and poised his dart the more resolvedly. One cry, methinks, on the Name of "Jesu," burst from the aged woman, as its point drew near her breast ; but that cry woke the sleeper, and lo, he sprang up, and planted himself before her, catching the dart as it flew.'

The Soldan looked up with interest, 'What and whence was the sleeper?' he asked, 'no Copt could have arrested the dart of a Mameluke.'

'No Copt.he ;' replied the Bul-bul, 'thy servant gazed on him, as on a vision from heaven, and thought of the words of the poet, for aptly do they describe him ; "A stately youth, eclipsing in grace and nobleness the Houries of Paradise.

"His form polished as the box-tree, erect as the cypress.

"His eyelashes darting wrathful arrows ; his pearly teeth, like lightning playing on a western sky."

'Thus looked he, though the damps of departing fever paled his forehead, and his hauberk, soiled and rusty, hung loosely about him. "Dog," he said, aiming back the djureed at him who had sent it, "let this teach thee to spend thy darts on the infirm and helpless."'

'The Mameluke rode howling away, his bruised arm hanging powerless at his side ; the Frank warrior meanwhile bent over that aged woman, and raised her from the ground, supporting her gently *against the trunk of the fig-tree.* "Oh, she is dead,"

he cried aloud, "fear and anguish have killed her, my only friend ! Alas ! that the curse which cleaves to me should also overshadow all that care for me !" He stood there unarmed and with folded hands, and meanwhile the guard swarmed round eager for his blood, yet restrained by the voice of Hossein Bey who now drew near. 'How now, slave dogs,' he said, 'how dare ye break the repose of the lord of the universe ? Begone, begone, and trouble not the steaming noontide with your brawls.' While that dreaded voice yet resounded in every ear, there was a pause ; perchance, the love of life had time meanwhile to spring up in the heart of the stranger, for I saw him cast an eagle glance around, then spring to the other side of the tree. A Mameluke charger, whose rider had dismounted to hold the stirrup of Hossein Bey, stood near. The stranger espied him, and springing into the saddle, pricked him with the stirrup, and was gone with the speed of light.

'Follow, follow,' cried Hossein Bey, who now saw how matters stood. 'A score of gold pieces to him who captures the bold infidel.'

'Ere the words were spoken, a band of Mamelukes was in full pursuit ; with what success we know not, for whirlwinds of sand flung up by the horses' feet darkened the air. These chances, dread Monarch, kept your slave away from his post at your royal feet.'

Mel-edîn raised the child's drooping head. 'If I mistake not,' he said, 'a graver offence than mere

tarrying craves our indulgence ; thy heart goes along with the infidel, even if thine hand aided not in his escape.'

The boy blushed and trembled. 'The desire of my heart,' he replied, 'escaped the control of my will, even as a bird the net of the fowler ; ah, dread King, had your highness but seen the gallant stranger, single-handed in the midst of foes, perchance'

'Perchance, I might have wished him well too," rejoined the Soldan, sinking back with a sigh. 'Is this what thou wouldest say, boy ? Aye, I read it in thy face, and for the sake of thy transparent truth I forgive thee ; sure,' he added, lifting the child's fair and wavy curls, 'no traitorous thought can lurk beneath that clear brow ! though all be false, thou, thou at least art true !'

At this appeal, the boy cast himself down, shedding passionate tears ; those bright drops bore surer evidences of loyalty than the utmost profusion of words could have conveyed, and Mel-edin watched them not unmoved. There was a long silence, scarcely interrupted by the measured flapping of the tent curtain, which a gentle breeze began to agitate. Presently, a signal to prepare for departure was heard throughout the camp, followed by the hum of voices, the neighing of horses, the taking down of tents, and other mingled, but not uncheerful sounds.

Hossein Bey, as usual before a march was resumed, waited on the Soldan for orders. As he did so, his

eyes fell scowlingly on the child-slave, his slight but potent rival in their master's affections. His previous dislike of the Bul-bul was now raised to the highest pitch, for he had seen the quick glance whereby the boy had directed Gawayne de Boteler's attention to the charger on which he had fled. Malice, like murder, 'will out,' and Hossein said with vindictive satisfaction to his master, 'The infidel hound who maimed one of your highness's body guard is re-captured ; behold, the order for his death this evening ; will it please your majesty affix your seal thereto ?'

The Soldan paused and pondered ; his slave, with pale cheek and dilated eye, gazed wistfully upon him, waiting his decision.

Hossein, seeing him waver, broke in thus : 'Know, O perfect King, that should this infidel outlive the night, by sunrise your Mamelukes will, to a man, have joined the Kurdish Emir !'

'Ha, dost threaten ?' responded the Soldan, his dark sleepy eye flashing, 'Then, by my father's soul, know, O Hossein, that if mischief befall this captive ere morning, thine own head shall pay for it. Use him well, until such time as my pleasure shall be declared concerning him.'

White with rage, Hossein returned to his excited followers ; but while he mechanically gave the wonted orders for departure, his spirit was busily seeking out some mode of revenging himself on the Soldan. Nor did he disdain to include in his malignant designs the child-slave, whom we have heard Mel-edîn

designate by the name of the 'Bul-bul.' This boy had more than once thwarted Hossein's schemes, by saving some life doomed by him to destruction. He seemed to be gifted with the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove, and had a strange tact in detecting and unravelling Hossein's crooked devices. They were never indeed revealed by him to any human being (for the Bul-bul, though courted by many, was familiar with none, save his imperial master), but Hossein nevertheless felt himself in the boy's power. This consciousness, and the remembrance of wrongs inflicted by himself, years back, on the unoffending child, now inflamed his malice to the highest pitch ; but self-interest, that most powerful motive in the breast of the Oriental, balanced and kept in check the wilder passions.

'Child of the fair-haired Frank,' he muttered, as he watched the boy reining in gracefully a white palfrey on which he usually rode, 'thou and I may not abide longer here together : would that I had left thee to perish, while yet a babe, in the flames of thy father's castle ! And so I had, but for the lordly ransom I looked for from thy kindred. Baulked of that, baulked again in the hope that thou shouldest prove my ready instrument with this crowned fool, what remains but to crush out thy little life ?'

He was now at the head of his band, who, with glances and gestures more turbulent than their wont, were looking towards the centre of the encampment, where their monarch's tent had been struck.

A bevy of Georgian and Circassian youths, richly dressed, and wearing bright silk scarves, and small falchions rather for show than use, hid him from sight. Their brilliant garb brought to mind the gorgeous clouds which often veil a sunset ; and, indeed, the luxury which it displayed was one among many signs that the sun of the Ayoubite dynasty was beginning to decline. But as that luminary often flashes up gloriously before its sinking, so did the spirit of Saladin's princely nephew on this day. To the breathless surprise of all, the circle round him opened, and he rode forth, attended only by a few Emirs known to be loyal to his cause. Slowly he approached his Mamelukes, mounted on a milk-white courser, and arrayed in a green robe and turban of spotless white, in front of which sparkled a glorious emerald. He rode with perfect grace, although his figure was somewhat inclined to corpulence ; nor were his features destitute of nobleness, especially when their sallowness, as now, gave place to the hue of animation. With his scymetar in one hand, and the other which held the reins, laid on a copy of the Koran attached to his girdle, he advanced to the side of Hossein Bey, who, in his surprise, reined his horse back a few paces. The Soldan raised his right hand still grasping the scymetar, to command attention.

‘Sons of the trackless waste,’ he said, in a voice clear, though not uplifted, ‘says your leader truly that ye murmur at the will of your Soldan ? that you who ride nearest to him, and partake of his salt,

dare dispute his command ? And what is it you seek ? the life of one poor Frank ! How now, are the heads of the infidels trophies so scarce amongst us, that for one, and that the head of an unarmed and captive man, ye would forfeit your allegiance ? Let the walls of Cairo speak ; let the ramparts of Dami-etta reply, every battlement whereof is crowned with the fleshless skull of a Christian.'

He paused, and the Mamelukes remained awhile motionless, silent, and abashed. At last murmurs broke out among a little knot of them : they had gathered round one of their comrades, the same whose arm the Christian had dislocated with his own djureed ; it now hung in a scarf, having been roughly pulled into its socket and then fired, according to the practice of those roving tribes whose surgery was of the most primitive kind. Its owner, urged on by his fellows, now advanced towards the Soldan, praying for redress or compensation. But Mel-edîn answered scornfully,

'Now by the bones of Malek-Adel, he shall have neither, this striker of old women ! Take his weapons from him, and let him return to Cairo to-night, and learn henceforward not to chaffer with his lord.'

The man was quickly disarmed, Hossein Bey officiously assisting in the operation. Mel-edîn looked on, not unmindful of the downcast and altered looks of his body-guard.

'After storm, sunshine,' he remarked to his treasurer ; 'if thou hast not already paid the score of

gold pieces to him who recaptured the Frank, do so at once. If any deem,' he added, addressing the Mamelukes, 'that Mel-edîn loves not the sport of the djureed, let him now learn his error. Behold this wristlet of gold'—he took one from his arm, and held it aloft, on the point of a slender lance—'he who can strike it with his dart, shall win and wear it!'

Several Emirs came forward, either to remonstrate with Mel-edîn on the risk he incurred, or to offer to relieve him of the lance with its costly burden ; but he waved them aside, flinching not a jot as the first dart whistled past him. A second followed, then a third, thrown with so true an aim and so steady a hand, that it caught the wristlet, without displacing the lance in Mel-edîn's grasp.

The fortunate winner dismounted, and throwing himself at the Soldan's feet, kissed the hem of his scarf and the very trappings of his horse. Gloom and insubordination vanished from every brow ; the march was resumed ; the monarch shrouded himself once more in his usual stately dreariness ; and Hossein Bey was left to brood over his frustrated plot with fresh bitterness.

When the moonless autumnal night set in, the party halted once more. Hossein, as usual, waited on his royal master, and having composed his sinister features, and assumed a calm and complacent expression, thus addressed him :

‘All hail, O monarch ! peace and blessing attend thy repose ! As the damps of night are drawn upwards, and turned to brightness by the sun’s rays, so hath thy beaming countenance turned to loyal zeal the discontent of thy Mamelukes !’

‘It is well,’ replied Mel-edîn, whose short-lived wrath had died out, though the pleasant flush of triumph still prevailed over the habitual apathy of his mind. ‘’Tis well ; by the blessing of God and His prophet, they shall find me indeed a king, not the vain shadow of a king, as mine enemies would have me ! Go to the traitor Emad-Edîn, and bid him attend me here ; he is one who neither fears God nor regards man ; therefore by his own weapons of craft or violence must he be met. Thy brain, O Hossein, is rich in expedients ; should it seem good to me to rid the camp of his presence, find me a colourable pretext for sending him back to his native Koordistan.’

The Soldan spoke in his former confidential tone, yet was not his minister propitiated.

‘If this son of Ayoub,’ thought Hossein, ‘begin to see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears, short, O Hossein, will be thy career : see to it ere mischief befall thee.’ He merely said, however, after brief pause, ‘The port of Suez needs a garrison, who so fit to hold it as this Emir and his wild followers, with whom none in the camp will consort ? Should he prove mutinous, it needs but to breathe *one word* to your highness’s illustrious brother, the

n of Damascus (who, as I think, will pass that with his host ere next full moon), and Emad-shall see Koordistan no more.'

e Soldan eyed his minister with a glance
xen admiration and aversion.

o to!' he exclaimed: 'could mortal hand set
o the pile of Tophet, thine would! Now hie
hence, and do my bidding.'

hour later Hossein Bey, was seen approaching
camp of the Koords, with a guard of Mamelukes.
ismounted, and was led with the usual cere-
as to the tent of Emad-Edîn, whom he found

They sat down opposite one another; the
of both were imperfectly visible by the light of
hly-kindled lamp, swinging from the centre of
ent. Perhaps two more villainous countenances
not have been found, even in that land and
age of perfidy, yet was their expression different.
Koord looked what he was, acute, decided, ruth-
accustomed to power from his youth up, used to
d oaths and promises as empty breath, when
performance interfered with the gratification of
assions. Hossein Bey had something of the
in his exterior, in his downcast eye, slouching
ders, and deprecating voice; but the eye, as we
said before, could kindle into ferocity; and the
had intonations in it which made the helpless
ler, and the widow's heart die within her.

he blessing of peace be upon my brother,' said
oftly.

‘When did Emad-Edîn account peace to be a blessing, or Hossein Bey to be his brother?’ asked the Koord with scornful abruptness. ‘If thou have aught to say, O son of the crooked serpent, speak it briefly; what cause brings thee hither to-night?’

‘The will of my master, the Soldan,’ answered Hossein; ‘he the lord of the universe, bids me summon thee to his presence, O Emad-Edîn; and now mine errand is spoken; fare thee well!’

Emad-Edîn sat silent awhile, regarding his visitor with a keen and searching glance. Seeing that the wily Hossein added no more, but made as though he would depart, the Koord stretched out his hand, and detained him by his cloak.

‘We have dallied long with one another, O Hossein,’ he said, ‘but it is now time to put in the sickle, therefore hear me. I gloze not, as thou dost of friendship or goodwill betwixt us two: shall the muddy water of these canals mingle with the torrents that leap from our hills? But I have need of thee, and thou of me; thy keen wit hath guessed mine aims; I also have discovered thine, and hold thee in my power; ay, start not—a chance, unsought by me, hath laid bare to mine eye the slimy track of thy past life, and also of thy present schemes; if thou doubt it incline thine ear.’

Hossein mechanically obeyed, and his face grew livid as the Emir whispered,

‘Who ate the bread of Conrad of Tyre, and then stabbed him?’ Emad-Edîn smiled as he marked the

consternation his words produced. ‘Let that pass,’ he continued, waving his hand ; I am not called to be his avenger, and do but show thee that I hold the clue of thy fortunes ; work with me, and thou mayest attain the topmost round of the ladder of greatness : betray me, and thou shalt perish !’

Hossein Bey bent his head in token of acquiescence, and the Koord rapidly went on,

‘It sorts with my humour that Mel-Edîn should be deposed, and that Saf-Edîn, his youngest brother, should bear the sceptre—thou know’st him ?’

‘Well,’ replied the Mameluke, ‘a butterfly youth, who would sell the empire of Saladin for a black-eyed slave, and a cup of wine.’

‘Nevertheless,’ said the Emir, ‘his brother’s crown hath charms for him, or rather for his fierce-eyed mother, the favoured wife of Malek-Adel. He is with the host near Damietta, awaiting our coming ; one hour well used shall transfer the diadem of Saladin to him, and his Syrian patrimony to me. If thou, O leader of slaves, wilt join with us, and throw dust into the eyes of the doomed Mel-Edîn, his private treasure, his harem and rich spoils shall be thine. Thou dost mistrust me ; bring parchment and ink, and a written agreement signed and sealed after the manner of the Christians, shall dispel thy fears.’

‘And the hosts of the Infidels ?’ inquired Hossein Bey, after deep musing : ‘will they not take advantage of our broils, to cut us to pieces ?’

‘We have looked to that,’ replied Emad-Edîn, ‘and, in the name of Saf-Edîn, have held out the hand of amity to the grey-haired man called King of Jerusalem ; he and his fellows are right weary of the war, and consent to treat with us, so soon as we shall have obtained the mastery.’

The contracted grasp of Hossein’s mind seemed scarcely able to embrace this daring and extensive conspiracy. He would fain have drawn back, but saw that ruin and exposure would follow his doing so, for Emad-Edîn was not a man to be thwarted with impunity.

The Koord saw his hesitation, and took some pains to remove it, and to secure so needful a tool. It was ordered that they should by forced marches reach the main body of the army, encamped south of Dami-etta, in two days from that time ; the very night of their arrival, Emad-Edîn was to communicate with the numerous chiefs whom he had already enlisted in the cause of Saf-Edîn. Ere sunrise, the blow was to be struck, Hossein having previously corrupted or disarmed the Soldan’s guard, drugged his chamberlains, and removed the ‘Bul-bul.’

‘And Mel-Edîn ?’ asked the Mameluke, in a hoarse whisper : ‘what fate is decreed for him ?’

‘Canst thou ask ?’ laughed Emad-Edîn bitterly ; ‘could Saf-Edîn be more than the shadow of a monarch while his brother lived ? He must be strangled in his first sleep, and committed ere dawn to the safe keeping of Nile, truly as royal a sepulchre as

yonder mountains of masonry we left behind us this morning !'

Enough and too much of the plottings of these villains. Ere they parted, Hossein saw that Emad-Edîn was master of his fate, and not without reluctance fell into all his schemes, as the tree falls into the devastating mass of the avalanche. The more minute details of the treachery were left to Hossein, and now but one difficulty remained, that of finding a trustworthy messenger to the Christian camp.

It was needful that with the least possible delay, King John of Jerusalem should learn the hour appointed for the projected revolution, in order that he might assist the cause of Saf-Edîn by feigning an attack on the Egyptian camp at that same moment. Of the base and murderous character of the plot, John was in ignorance, as its authors knew his chivalrous temper too well to trust him with its details. He had treated with Emad-Edîn's emissaries, chiefly through the medium of his physician, one Simeon a converted Jew skilled in Eastern languages and phraseology and in the crooked diplomacy of Eastern princes. It was needful therefore to communicate with this Simeon without loss of time ; and the messenger who should convey to him either written or verbal information in so perilous a matter, must be quick-witted, prudent, and bound either by honour or interest to fulfil his mission at all risks. No Koord or Saracen in Emad-Edîn's confidence possessed these requisites ; nor, indeed, was it possible

for such to obtain admission within the Christian camp, even under the sacred character of a herald. Assassinations had been so frequently attempted by them lately in that garb, that the Crusaders had grown distrustful. A Frank messenger must therefore be found.

‘We have a prisoner,’ said Hossein, ‘who might serve our purpose well, quick of eye and of wit, light of foot as the wild roe, a practised horseman after the fashion of the Frank chivalry. I will send him.’

‘And who shall ensure his faithfulness?’ inquired the Koord. ‘Bethink thee, for our plot doth hang on the grey-haired king; should he fail us, all is lost.’

‘I dare answer for the prisoner,’ answered Hossein, musingly; ‘we have indeed no hold on him save that airy pledge the Franks call “honour;” a rope of sand we should account it, yet have I seen men bound by it as by iron bands: our Soldan himself is not free from this madness.’

While Emad-Edîn, numerously attended by his Koords and accompanied by his brother conspirator, rides to the royal-quarters, we turn to a far different scene, enacted within a flight-shot of the Soldan’s tent. Here one spreading plane-tree intercepts the starlight; its delicate foliage, bright with the glories of the decaying year, shelters the party collected under it from the heavy night dews; a spring bubbles up close at hand, moistens the roots of the

noble tree, and creates a patch of verdure round it. The Mameluke guard pass the night here, and while most of them sleep soundly, a few watch the fires which they had kindled at even-tide in order to cook their suppers. Two sentinels keep guard near the plane-tree, which is converted for the time into a prison. Five of its occupants are Copts, uncouth, swarthy beings, who lie on the ground huddled together, and barely covered by their striped blanket cloaks. The sixth, a tall, slight, soldier-like figure, leans wearily against the trunk of the tree, to which he is attached by a rope. His hands are tied behind his back, an indignity specially ordered by Hossein Bey, who cannot forgive him for having excited the languid sympathy of Mel-êdin. In this position he courts sleep in vain.

When last we saw Gawyne de Boteler—and as yet he has appeared to us but as a fleeting vision, one of those appearances which

‘Come like shadows, so depart,
Mock the eye and grieve the heart’

—when last we saw him, I say, he had plunged into the reeds which border the Nile, seeking a refuge from the Dominicans. It was rather to hide himself than to preserve his life, that he thus fled—for, without the endearments of home, without scope for chivalrous deeds, without Rosamond, was value in his eyes. A fever, brought on by over exertion in the attack of the river-fort, was already burn-

ing in his veins. Grief, and that sense of injury which weighs so heavily on young hearts, aggravated the disease, and he sank down helpless and friendless.

But his good angel had not forsaken him.

Two Coptish boatmen, who plied on the Nile, and supported their families by conveying provisions to the besieging army, chanced to have moored their boat near the spot where De Boteler lay. They took pity on him, carried him on board, and committed him to the kind though rough tendance of their mother, the aged Christian woman whose death the 'Bul-bul' afterwards witnessed.

Despoiled of their boat by some Saracen marauders, they subsequently left the banks of the Nile and wandered to Heliopolis, carrying Gawyne along with them. Here the Saracens suddenly crossed their path; the Copts fearing that their trade with the Christian camp might expose them to danger, fled precipitately; then followed the events recorded by the 'Bul-bul;' Gawyne's attempt to escape might have proved as successful as it was bold, had he not fallen into the track already taken by the flying Copts. Seeing these harmless and friendly people attacked by the Mamelukes, he could not choose but draw rein and strike a stroke in their defence. The struggle of three able-bodied men against a score fully armed, was of course unavailing, and the whole party were captured, and dragged back to the camp. *The Copts*, three of whom were young boys, easily

resigned themselves to their position, and dismissing all thought for the future, laid them down on the green patch of turf to sleep.

It was a relief to De Boteler when evening closed in, and his captors, who had exhausted upon him all the taunts, threats, and gibes which the Turcoman vocabulary could suggest, dropped off to seek repose. As the stars came out, one or another twinkled kindly at him through the branches ; a gentle breeze uplifted the delicately-veined plane leaves, and fanned his throbbing forehead ; something of calmness stole into his heart, and he felt himself able to look back on the past, and forward to the doom which awaited him, with composure. That he was to die at sunrise, Hossein Bey had announced some hours before ; that his severed limbs were to be exposed on the rampart of Damietta, he had learnt from the triumphant gestures of the Slave guards. He cared not for that ; the sting of death lay not there ; it lay rather in the solitude of his last moments, cut off from comrades-in-arms, from kith and kin and holy church—no loving eye to meet his—no good man near to ease the vexed conscience with counsel or prayer—no gentle messenger to whisper to his Rosamond that he loved her yet ! These were the thoughts which wrung a few burning tears from his eyes as he leaned against the solitary plane-tree ; he could not wipe them away, for his hands were tied, but the night wind which went softly by, sighing as it went, kissed them off his

cheek, as his mother had often done in boyish years. His mother, now a blessed saint on high, radiant as yonder mild and glittering star that twinkles in the north-east over Jerusalem ! Could she still behold her erring son, or, beholding, still love him ? Oh, on that thought he dared not dwell, for betwixt her and him was there not now a great gulf fixed ?

With a stifled groan he shook off the thought, shutting his eyes tightly as though by so doing he could exclude it from his mind. A flash of sudden light caused him quickly to re-open them, and he saw at his side a boy some eleven summers old, richly dressed, and wearing a turban on his fair young head. Several young men, apparently of Circassian origin, accompanied the boy, and appeared to be under his orders. One held a small lamp with wrought silver handle, and fed with aromatic oil ; another bore a cloak of the fine Bokhara lambskin, then worn by chiefs only ; a third carried embroidered slippers, of Moorish fashion ; the fourth presented a richly-hafted knife to the boy, who silently, but with looks of earnest purpose, addressed himself to cutting away the captive's bonds. Gawyne gazed on him silently also, wondering whether this were a reality, or merely a vision of delight vouchsafed to soothe his last hour. ' If thou come to lead me forth to die,' he said at length in such Arabic as he could command, ' thou art welcome ; sure Heaven, in sending a messenger so gracious, speaks mercy *and peace* to my parting soul.'

The child looked wistfully at him. 'I am not Azrael, the Angel of Death,' he replied. 'I am of flesh and blood as thou, the poor page and minstrel of Mel-edîn, lord of Egypt and lover of the brave. By his command I come to free thee from these fetters ; arise therefore, and rejoice in thy liberty, as the ice-bound brook in the warmth of summer !

De Boteler rose up, and taking the lamp from the Georgian's hand, perused his young deliverer's features. 'I owe deep thanks to thy lord,' he said, 'and yet deeper to thee, fair boy ; for, I think, thou didst this morning point to me the way of escape when hemmed in by foes. Speak, was it not so ?'

'It was,' replied the page ; 'but,' added he, with an arch glance towards their attendants, 'the finger on the lip as touching that, I pray thee, Sir Knight, else these gilded puppets who know not what freedom is, might brand me traitor for the deed.'

'Thou, then, art free ?' asked De Boteler, laying his hand gently on his deliverer's shoulder. He forgot his own hard lot while awaiting the boy's answer, for the ingenuous glance of those blue eyes had won strangely upon him. It came, however, slowly and sadly, with deep blushes and stammering speech. 'No, Sir Knight, I am not free—not free to come and go at mine own will—yet sure I was free-born,' he added, looking up almost proudly in Gawayne's face. 'My heart tells me I am no

At that moment they were startled by the sound of horses' feet. The Koordish chief and Hossein Bey, with their followers, were passing by towards Mel-edîn's tent. Hossein paused before the plane-tree, and lifting a quivering branch with the point of his lance, peered in upon the group assembled there. The keen eye of Emad-Edîn turned in that direction also.

'What doest thou here, son of the nameless one?' asked Hossein, addressing the Bul-bul in his blandest tone; 'and by whose authority dost thou loose this infidel?'

'By the authority of our master, the lord Mel-edîn,' replied the boy, holding up a ring well known as the Soldan's; one large sapphire formed its centre; the hoop was of gold, with words adapted from the Koran engraved upon it, 'All grace below is but a shadow of Thy grace;' it was Mel-edin's usual token of pardon or reprieve.

Hossein Bey bent his head to the saddle bow, and replied, 'When the lord of the universe doth extend grace even to the unbeliever, who shall gainsay?' but the smooth words were contradicted by the scowl which accompanied them, and letting the bough fall, he rode rapidly on in advance of his party. The Koord followed, with a mocking laugh.

De Boteler could but dimly guess at the import of this brief dialogue, and at the character of Hossein Bey. But he marked his sinister glance; he also *observed* that the boy had turned deadly pale, and

stood with his young brow knit and his fingers uneasily clasped, as though in perplexity. 'Again,' thought Gawyne, 'again is it my lot to bring evil on those who treat me gently. Oh for a cave in some vast desert, where I may hide from my fellow men, from their malice and their love alike !'

While thus in the bitterness of his heart he soliloquised, the 'Bul-bul' had recovered himself, and put his hand into Gawyne's. 'Thou art weary, Sir Knight,' he said, 'suffer me to bring thee to the bath and the couch prepared for thee ; thou art athirst and hungry, let these hands minister to thy refreshment ; no longer the Soldan's captive, but his guest, come and taste of his princely hospitality.'

De Boteler shook his head ; 'Gramercy, gentle messenger,' he replied, 'long will the remembrance of this kindness abide as a green spot in my seared heart, but I must begone ; king's courts, and soft raiment, and delicate food, are not for me ; now, fare thee well ! linger not in the company of one who can but bring thee to woe ; I, being weary, will tarry here till dawn, then get me away far off in the wilderness.'

The boy sighed ; truly he was free-born in heart and soul, if not in outward condition, for he had discerned De Boteler's true nobility in spite of mean body and rusted hauberk. He could appreciate purity and chivalrous faith when he beheld them stamped on the Christian's brow, and the contrast between these and the atmosphere of softness and

perfidy in which he lived, startled and humbled him. De Boteler's tone was so peremptory, that he durst not press his services, so he signed to the Georgians to withdraw, and prepared to follow.

'Bear with thee,' said De Boteler, 'my thanks to thy lord for sparing this worthless life ; and, gentle boy, if, as I read in thine eye, thou wouldest still serve me, intercede for these poor peasants, whose care of me hath brought them loss and grief ; I have nought left wherewith to recompense their service.' He did not say that his last silver coin had been given to procure decent sepulture for their aged mother.

'Oh, that boon is but too easy of accomplishment,' replied the boy, with brightening face ; 'they shall go hence to-morrow free, and not destitute ; and thou, O knightly stranger, I do beseech thee, show me one kindness, one little kindness in return. Thou art unarmed ; would I had a sword of keenest temper to buckle at thy side, but failing that, deign to accept this hunting dagger, 'twill be some poor protection against thy foes.'

So saying, he unfastened a '*couteau de chasse*' from the baldric, or belt, which he wore, and which was in itself worthy of attention. It was composed of small oval medallions, silver gilt, attached to a narrow leather girdle, and united to one another by silver chainlets. Each medallion bore embossed upon it the figure of a man erect, a crown of rays round his head, in his hand a palm branch. The

haft of the dagger bore the same device. Its two-edged blade was of the finest steel, equal to that manufactured at Damascus. A second knife, of somewhat lesser dimensions, was likewise appended to the baldric.

‘Take it I pray you,’ reiterated the boy. ‘It is indeed mine to give.’ The urgent appeal and tearful eyes could not be resisted, and so they bade one another farewell, De Boteler saying as they parted,

‘Thou hast warned me against foes ; look that wilier foes entrap not thee ; have a care of the Mameluke chief ; he has the eye of a basilisk, the tongue of an adder ; he loves thee not ; give him no occasion to harm thee.’

‘He loves not my master,’ replied the boy, indignantly ; ‘and, if I err not greatly, even now, weaves meshes for his destruction ; but by God’s grace, the “nameless one” shall rend those meshes in sunder.’

One gesture of farewell, and he was gone, and De Boteler was left alone to meditate bitterly on his newly-acquired freedom, and on the use he should make of it. Wild projects of leaving the precincts of Christendom, and exploring the realms of Prester John, and Cathay, careered through his brain at first ; but they soon gave place to other scarcely less desperate resolves. He would make his way to Palestine, and gather together a band amongst the needy and unscrupulous fighting men who swarmed there, and make himself a name. He would brave the menaces of the Church, if he could not

appease her wrath ; she had spurned him from her bosom, and now, whatever recklessness of living he might fall into, her's was the blame. Such were the feverish fancies that crowded his mind, wearied and shattered as it was with dashing against the bars of his hard fate. O perilous moment, when passion lords it over reason, and the victim of oppression, denied access to God and man, sees no road but the downward one open before him !

The exhausted body after a while asserted her rights, and Gawyne's cogitations assumed the shape of dreams. They by degrees subsided, and he lay in deep untroubled sleep till morning dawn. A stir among the Copts then awoke him, and he rose and found them in a state of joyous excitement, counting out a bag of silver coins, and preparing for departure. They had despatched their simple breakfast, and had kindly placed near him a bowl of porridge made from Indian corn. This he gladly partook of, after bathing in a tolerably clear pool which lay near ; and now, a Mameluke approached leading a strong horse, handsomely, though not showily caparisoned. He drew up before De Boteler, and laid at his feet a sword, and a scroll of parchment, on which was inscribed in the usual form a safe conduct from the Soldan. 'These,' he said, in imperfect Arabic, 'are the gifts of Mel-Edin, lord of the world, and lover of the brave ;' then, turning on his heel, as though unable to hide the distastefulness of the commission, *he abruptly departed.*

Here was a fresh proof of the 'Bul-bul's' remembrance, and it touched Gawwyne's affectionate nature deeply. He now set out slowly, taking the direction of Suez, and possessed with a vague intention of making his way through the Desert to Syria. 'The world was all before him where to choose' his field of action, but this unchartered freedom was a burden not a joy ; he rode listlessly on, leaving cultivation behind him, and entering on the sandy tract where not even his horse's footfall disturbed the brooding silence of the outstretched wilderness.

Wild whooping cries behind him broke rudely and suddenly on the stillness, and De Boteler turning his head saw himself pursued by several Mamelukes. His first impulse was to prepare for an unequal contest, but as they drew near, he perceived that their intentions were peaceable. He accosted them, therefore, and in compliance with their gestures, turned back till he met their leader. The wild horsemen returned to their ranks, leaving De Boteler and Hossein Bey side by side ; the free upright carriage and open brow of the Christian were as unlike his companion's sidelong glance and slouching gait, as the poisonous parasite of the tropics is to the sapling oak of our own island.

'Hail thou whom our Soldan delights to honour,' said the wily minister of Mel-Edîn. 'May I now greet thee as one of the happy few enrolled in his service, and privileged to enjoy the outpourings of his royal favours ?'

The servile tone and hypocritical blandness of this speech disgusted De Boteler ; he would have returned a curt answer, had it not occurred to him that it would be more for the safety of his deliverer, the child slave, that he should explicitly disavow all connexion with Mel-Edin. He, therefore, replied coldly, ‘ Your Soldan has given me life and freedom ; he is too generous to require in return that which a Christian may not give ; my gratitude is for ever his, but mine allegiance may not be transferred to the crescent.’

Hossein looked incredulous. ‘ Thou art wary, Sir Knight, and I was overbold perchance, to inquire into the goings and comings of one on whom the sun of the universe smiles ; but it had been whispered in mine ear (pardon me if I erred in believing it), that thou, banished by thy Frank compeers, didst seek service in our camp.’

‘ Never,’ replied De Boteler, a crimson flush mantling in his hollow cheek, in spite of his efforts to be calm, ‘ suffice it to thee, O captain, to know that I seek no boon nor service from thy master. None, by my faith, if that word be known to thee.’

Hossein Bey rode on in silence, intimating by a sign to De Boteler that their conference was not at an end ; at length, he turned to him, and said, ‘ Christian, thou spakest even now of gratitude to our Soldan for life and liberty bestowed upon thee ; say, is thy gratitude mere empty breath, or would’st thou prove it by deeds ?’

Gawayne was about to reply, when the Mameluke leader interrupted him, and with an affectation of frankness, went on, ‘Nay, those flashing eyes speak thine eager zeal more plainly than words ; hearken then to me. Our master, (thou hast never beheld him, as I think ?) our master hath of late suffered from wearing disease both of mind and body. His strength decays, his blood creeps sluggishly through his veins, the new care of this great empire weighs his spirits down, no remedy that our leeches can compound seems to possess virtue to restore him. Now there is in the Christian camp a physician, named Simeon the Jew ; this man is in the employ of him whom ye call King of Jerusalem, having of late renounced the law of Moses for the law of your Prophet ; he knows the temper of our lord’s mind and body thoroughly, and moreover possesses an elixir that never fails to cheer and strengthen him. Thou, O stranger, and thou alone, hast power to communicate with this Simeon, and to obtain for my much-loved master the medicine he doth languish for. Say, therefore, wilt thou bear a letter to this physician ? I will provide thee with escort and safe conduct to the precincts of the infidel camp, if thou wilt penetrate within its recesses, and deliver the parchment to Simeon.’

De Boteler did not at once reply, and drew back, unable to reflect or decide while those serpent-like eyes were fixed upon him. Hossein’s proposal, though straight-forward in itself, yet excited his

suspicious, coming through such a channel ; his affectation of devotion to the Soldan was too gross and too plainly contradicted by the selfish cunning stamped upon his features, to deceive any acute observer ; and Gawyne could not but look out for the sinister motive which he felt sure lurked beneath. On the other hand, the thought of serving his benefactor, Mel-edîn, in the only way in which a Christian could serve him, warmed Gawyne's heart ; nor could a further inducement to undertake the adventure be entirely shut out. He had heard while lying helpless in the Nile boat, faint rumours of the arrival of English troops at Damietta, and his heart throbbed wildly to know whether those he loved best were there. Perchance he might (himself unknown) pick up tidings of Sir Richard Fytton, he might learn whether Rosamond's cherished dream of visiting the holy shores had been realized—he might what might he not do ? what hope is too wild to be caught at by the young heart when rebounding from the pressure of grief nearly akin to despair ?

We will not repeat the arguments with which Hossein Bey plied De Boteler ; suffice it to say, that they were artfully set forth, and completely successful. He turned back to the Mamelukes' quarters, where all were in full activity preparing for the morning's march. The promised escort and passport were speedily furnished, and Hossein, after a prolonged absence returned, and placed in De Boteler's

hand a small scroll of vellum ; upon which was inscribed 'To Simeon, father of healing ;' it contained a request for an immediate supply of the 'Elixir of joy and health,' prefaced by a few phrases of oriental compliment, and followed by a not very flattering description of the illustrious patient for whose relief it was desired. His 'yellowness of skin,' 'flaccidity of muscle,' and 'scant breathing,' were dwelt upon in detail ; his importance as the 'Eye of Egypt,' and 'main pillar of the house of Ayoub,' was alluded to in such a manner as to leave no doubt who was meant, though etiquette forbade the royal name being given. A document more innocent of treason than this appeared could not well be imagined.

Hossein Bey pointed out to De Boteler the chief of his escort, a shrewd middle-aged Mameluke armed to the teeth, whom Gawayne rightly suspected to be a spy set to watch over him. To this person, he said, De Boteler might safely entrust the 'elixir,' and any missive from Simeon the Jew which might accompany it ; he proceeded delicately to hint that Gawayne's return to the Soldan's head-quarters would be not only unnecessary, but undesirable, but seeing the young warrior's brow contract at being thus dictated to, he adroitly changed the subject.

Taking from an attendant's hands a silver goblet, Hossein drank a deep draught of the liquor it contained, then offered it ceremoniously to De Boteler. The Christian knew enough of oriental customs to be

aware that he could not without offence refuse this Paynim stirrup-cup. He drank sparingly, however, suspecting rightly that it was the well-known 'haschisch,' or cordial distilled from hemp, memorable, as having given their name of 'Assassins'* to the 'Old Man of the Mountain' and his followers. Its taste was repulsive, though disguised by an infusion of cloves, camphor, and fragrant aromatic herbs. Its effects however on De Boteler, weakened as he had been by illness, were delightful. He at once felt a glow diffused over his frame, and as he rode on, a feeling of intense enjoyment such as he had never known before, took possession of him. It seemed as though the sun shone upon every thought that passed through his brain, extraordinary energy and power pervaded mind and body, difficulties vanished, or were remembered only with a strange proud consciousness of superiority over them. He no longer wondered at the desperate, all but incredible feats, attributed to the Assassins, while under the influence of this stimulant. As he travelled rapidly north-ward, he found that his mind, though singularly clear on other subjects, grew confused as to time. Moments seemed as hours, and hours as years, till present and past were strangely confounded together. It needed a violent effort of mind to shake off this delusion, but De Boteler happily succeeded in doing so, and in turning his attention

* Originally "Haschischius."

to outward objects. He and his party rode on a causeway, nearly paral-
lel with the Nile ; its waters
had been sinking rapidly since September, and had
now left the canals which branched from it, nearly
empty. A rich deposit of black slime covered the
land, and though beautiful in the eye of the agricul-
turalist, presented a gloomy unpicturesque aspect
to the gaze of the traveller. The night being moon-
less, our party halted, when darkness gathered in, at
a small and half-ruined village. They were now
within ten miles of Damietta, and observed the fear-
ful traces of war, fruit-trees cut down, houses burnt,
hamlets deserted, and a most fertile tract of land
laid desolate. Before dawn, they were again in the
saddle, and as the eastern sky flushed into morning,
they reached a spot where the river could be crossed
on a raft. A creek fringed with high reeds, offered
a convenient halting and hiding-place ; here they
breakfasted, and De Boteler, marking well its posi-
tion, bade his escort await his return on that spot.
He donned a plain dark tunic over his hauberk,
pulled his cap far over his brows, and thus disguised
crossed the Nile, and proceeded to the quarters of
King John. In that part of the camp, he thought
it would be easy to preserve his incognito, as he
had few acquaintances among the French and Cala-
brian knights, who formed the suite of the titular
monarch. Yet his heart beat thick as he heard
the hum of Christian voices, and saw mailed
figures in the distance, and a standard with the

loved and venerated ensign of the Cross waving overhead ; the banished man bent one knee for a moment, and rapturously thanked God for this joy, evanescent and troubled though it might prove.

CHAPTER VI.

‘ But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him.’—*St. Luke*, xv. 20.

DE BOTELER imagined himself tolerably conversant with the order of the Christian host, and with the position of the various nations which composed it. Though the papal anathema under which he lay had prevented his taking part in the siege under his own name and colours, yet as ‘ *Sieur Tristan*,’ he had won himself renown ; his ingenuous and manly bearing, and the melancholy reserve which made him draw back from all advances, excited an interest in knightly breasts. Some warriors, jealous of his rising fame, had sneered at the mystery which hung about him, and insinuated surmises to his disadvantage. But the more discerning took his part warmly.

‘ He was not born to shame,
Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit.’

Several distinguished leaders had sought his acquaintance, and though he declined their proffered hospitalities, he was too keen a soldier not to seize every opportunity of acquiring military knowledge from them. Thus he had obtained access to most

parts of the widely-extended camp, and could have threaded its labyrinth with ease at the beginning of August. But he now saw the aspect of things greatly altered, and some unlooked-for obstacles thrown in his way.

The standard with the white cross embroidered upon it, which had gladdened De Boteler's eyes, floated over the former quarters of the King of Jerusalem ; but on a nearer approach, he perceived that it was not John of Brienne's. The cross was the eight-pointed one of the Knights Hospitalers, and instead of tents, Gawyne saw a long line of rude wooden huts, stretching up the gentle eminence which they occupied. He imagined that these must have been erected for the sick, and was confirmed in the impression by seeing many 'donats' or unpaid hospitalers of the third class passing in and out ; they might be recognised by their black mantles and staid demeanour, and by the white demi-cross on their shoulders.

It was in vain to seek information from these men, as the rule of their order forbade their conversing with strangers. De Boteler, therefore, passed on, expecting every moment a challenge, and marvelling more and more that he received none ; the outskirts of the camp, round which he cautiously explored, appeared to be almost deserted, and the few soldiers whom he saw grouped here and there were evidently shaken by severe illness. They looked *haggard* and shrunk ; some wore an expression of

fierceness, others of listlessness. He accosted them, inquiring the 'whereabouts' of the royal force, but they shook their heads to intimate that the Norman-French and the English in which he spoke were alike unintelligible. He passed on, skirting the quarters of the recently-landed German force ; these men appeared more healthy and cheerful and in a better state of discipline than those who had borne the whole brunt of the siege ; a sentinel who was stationed at one of the out-posts challenged De Boteler ; but the Norman pass-word, 'Dieux-aide,' satisfied him, and he suffered the wanderer to proceed. The pass-word, 'Arrai,' obtained admission for Gawyne within the lines of William, Count of Holland, a gallant nobleman who had been one of the first to take up the cross ; but how mournful was the spectacle that greeted him there ! Disease had evidently committed fearful ravages among his soldiers, and was still at work, thinning their ranks and crushing the energies of such as survived. Several large mounds, newly raised, and surmounted with plain wooden crosses, pointed out the spots where numbers had been buried at once. The yearly inundation of the Nile which had been unusually high this autumn, had brought in its train, fever, ague, and dysentery. Unwholesome food and hardships unparalleled in the annals of war, had rendered the scourge more fatal, and now the tainted air and impure water aggravated its effects. With heavy heart, he drew near a solitary palm-tree, which had

been left standing as a sort of watch-tower. Its trunk rose thirty feet or more without a single branch to aid the climber, but it was notched at intervals, and a hand-rope wound round it and attached to a foot-board near the top of the tree. This very primitive observatory was covered in by the graceful crown of green palm leaves. In a few moments De Boteler had ascended to it, and obtained an extended view over the flat. There was Nile, brown and thick, faintly glimmering in the distance to his right ; Damietta rampart visible beyond ; at his feet the camp. The royal standard of Jerusalem was planted in the midst, nearer the river than it had been two months before—the beloved ensign of Austria, under which Gawyne had acquired his latest laurels, could not be seen from this point, Duke Leopold having moved his troops to the station of most danger and honour, in front of the city ; but he distinguished the standard of Nevers, the lilies of Florence, silver-white on their red field, and further away, Earl Randle's golden sheaves. These shone as bright and fair as they had done three years before in sunny Poitou ; and oh, what stirring remembrances they woke in Gawyne's breast—his first hand-to-hand encounter with a foe ; the earl's concise but marked approval ; Sir Richard Fytton's fatherly pride in his exploits ; the flesh wound in his right arm, hastily bandaged then, but tended afterwards by Rosamond's light and loving hand ; the messenger despatched to his mother, and whose tidings caused the last

glow of earthly joy she was ever to know ; all these things rose to the exile's memory with torturing vividness. It needed all the stern determination which lay at the root of his character to enable him to drive them back, and bend every thought to the present. So he turned his back on the banner with its azure folds, and having mastered the topography of the camp in every direction, descended to the plain.

De Boteler approached the quarters of John of Brienne with bold but wary step. He found it one great hospital ; the sick almost as numerous as those who tended them, the healthy pale with anxiety and apprehension. Their fears were added to by a rumour that symptoms of plague had shown themselves in the camp, and men who would have hailed with rapture the summons to deadly assault or battle-field, shivered at the suspicion of that disease lurking in their neighbourhood. Gawyne was at once accosted by a grey-haired henchman of the king's guard, with the questions, ' Whence come you ? and whom seek you ?'

He replied without hesitation, ' I come from the head-quarters of the Soldan, and I seek one Simeon, physician to the high and noble John, King of Jerusalem ; I pray thee obtain me access to him.'

The henchman paused, startled by the boldness of De Boteler's avowal ; he scrutinised the stranger narrowly from head to foot, as far as the closed visor of the cap of mail would permit, and the scrutiny was

so prolonged, that Gawyne at length exclaimed, 'Nay, friend, surely a solitary man, unarmed save with this cutlass, need not awake so great suspicion ; one brief interview with the leech Simeon, in presence of whatever witnesses he may choose to call, is all I crave ; watch me, guard me as you will, so that be granted.'

The henchman knit his brows in growing perplexity. 'Young gentleman,' he answered, 'your purpose seems honest, and I have no desire to go beyond my warrant, nor to question with one of your degree ; yet—yet pardon me if I take you at your knightly word, and set what might seem an espial over you while near the person of my royal master ; so many traitors swarm hereabouts, that distrust is bred thereby.'

'Friend,' cried De Boteler, 'what true heart could take in dudgeon thy loyal care for thy master ? Lead me blindfolded if thou wilt to this physician ; let me but speak with him, then set me forth to your outposts, and,' he added with a heavy sigh, 'you shall see my face no more.'

'Most pity we should lose so stalwart a right arm,' replied the henchman, surveying Gawyne with approving eye, and with unrepressed but not unkindly curiosity. 'Pray you, come along with me, young Sir. It may be you shall wait long, for this Jew is never easy of access, and now doubly suspicious.'

At a signal from him, several men-at-arms had drawn near and formed a circle round De Boteler. The henchman, growing confidential, informed Gawyne that this precaution was prompted as much by regard for his safety, as for that of King John ; lowering his voice (a needless precaution, as the men-at-arms were all Cypriotes) he said in French, 'The camp is plague-stricken, men say, and certes a plague of wrath and doubting is abroad ; men talk of spies and poisoners, and of deadly venom infused by charms into our springs. A few days back the king was stricken with sickness, and hardly could the multitude be restrained from tearing in pieces Rabbi Simeon as author of this mischance ; even now that his highness is recovered, many look askance at the Jew, and the affrighted old man dies a thousand deaths daily.'

As he spoke, they advanced towards an open space in the midst of John of Brienne's encampment. It was surrounded by a slight palisade, outside which a throng of soldiers were collected, listening in various attitudes to the voice of some one speaking or preaching. The speaker was not yet visible, but it was evident that he possessed the power of riveting attention, for those grim veterans, gaunt from hardship and recent sickness, drank in his words with intense eagerness. Their gestures and countenances would have made a study for a painter ; a few looked defiant, as if hardening their hearts against some strong appeal which yet moved them ; on other

faces the expression of mockery was subsiding into that of sullenness ; others again were rapt in unwonted thought, or bathed in tears. Those who stood in the outmost circle pressed closely on their more fortunate comrades, as though they grudged to lose a syllable that was uttered. A number had climbed on the palisade for the better seeing and hearing, so that Gawyne could, even when close at hand, discern nothing within the arena but the top of a gigantic crucifix. It was at least twelve feet high, and very rudely executed, but to Gawyne's untrained eye it wore a solemn aspect ; the drooping Head and blood-stained thorny crown touched a chord in his heart which for long had not vibrated, and sharp self-accusing pangs shot through him. But he thrust them away ; ' pride ruled his will,' and prompted the bitter thought, ' My enemies have made me what I am ; theirs is the guilt, theirs be the shame and the reckoning !'

De Boteler and his guard now crossed some planks thrown over a narrow canal, one of several which branched from the Nile, and intersected the camp. Six weeks before, it had been swollen to an unusual height by the autumn inundations, and had overflowed its banks, and laid that part of the camp for some days under water ; when the thick and turbid flood slowly subsided, it left behind quantities of unwholesome vegetable matter, of dead fish, and (fearful to tell) of mangled remains of corpses, men who had perished in attacking or defending Damietta.

King John had exerted himself to the utmost to remove these nuisances, but they had poisoned both air and water, and a stifling vapour still hung over the canal, and sluggishly diffused itself through that crowded plain. No wonder that fever of every kind was rampant, but it suited the genius of that ignorant age better to attribute its ravages to magic and malignant spells, than to its natural causes ; so the unhappy Simeon and a few others, lay under heavy suspicion, and were in hourly jeopardy of their lives.

The royal pavilion was now in sight, and our party halted within a hundred yards of it, while a Cypriote soldier hastened forward to seek for Rabbi Simeon. De Boteler meanwhile strained his eyes in the direction of the invisible preacher, whose sonorous voice reached his ear fitfully. A movement in the crowd suddenly revealed him to sight. He stood erect in cowl and robe of coarse sacking, mounted on a pulpit of wood, at the opposite end of the inclosure from the tall crucifix we have described. A knot of illustrious warriors sat at his feet ; King John, pale and emaciated, was in the midst of them, his grey head uncovered, his eyes fixed on the preacher, whose vehement energy carried all before him.

‘ Who is this ? ’ whispered Gawwyne to the henchman ; ‘ this man or angel, with eyes of fire and voice like muttering thunder ? and what is the theme of his discourse ? ’

‘ ’Tis Brother Francis,’ replied the soldier. Whence come you, young gentleman, that his name should

sound strange in your ear? he, the preacher of repentance, the worker of miracles? to whom, men say, the very swine wallowing in mire do hearken. Even in Paynim land his fame is known.'

The stern, awful voice now rose higher and higher, and Francis of Assisi's diminutive stature seemed to rise with it. He stretched his right hand towards Heaven, and shook back the shaggy black locks that hung over his brow. A red spot burned on either thin cheek-bone.

'Brothers,' he cried, 'We are in a land of wonder and of terror! Nile of yore heard the voice of God, and ran blood-red; her fish died infected, and being dead, infected all round. Now she runs red once more, but this time it is with Christian gore.

'The sky above us was once black with stinging hornets, God's winged army; lightnings, mingled with hail, once ran along the ground beneath our feet! Such, and more terrible plagues did the Omnipotent wield for the destruction of impenitent sinners. He sent forth His angel at midnight, and lo, there was a great cry throughout Egypt; and in every house there lay one dead.

'Woe to us! not now on Egypt, but on His own Israel do the thunder-bolts of His wrath fall! In every tent is one dead; all faces gather blackness, all hearts are as melting wax!

'Wherefore is it so? Brothers, by reason of wickedness the camp mourneth; your envy, your *lusts*, your impiety, have drawn these judgments

down ; and, mark me, these are but scratches, yea, but flea-bitings, when compared with the wrath to come.'

He paused, not for rest, far less for effect, or with a view to watching the countenances of his hearers. No, it was genuine horror, and anguish of mind, and intense realizing of the truths he uttered, which made heart and voice die within him ; his head drooped awhile, resting on the edge of the rude pulpit, then raising it, he gazed fixedly on the crucifix over against him, and proceeded thus :

‘ *Frati diletteissimi, desideratissimi*, (brethren, dearly loved and longed-for) listen before it is too late ; turn ye, turn ye ere your feet stumble on the dark mountains. Repent, confess, pray, make restitution ; lay by your enmities. The pleasures of sin are brief ; there are pains which are eternal ! The cross is light to willing shoulders ; it will grind the unwilling to powder ; turn ye, my children all, and so shall it be well with you for evermore. Amen.

The preacher’s voice had exchanged its accents of terror, for those of most endearing gentleness. So have we heard organ notes in a cathedral rise and swell, filling every corner of the vast temple with pealing sound, then die away into a soft thrilling melody.

The multitude remained breathless after Brother Francis had ceased to speak, then with one impulse fell upon their knees, many amongst them sobbing aloud, others crying, ‘ *Misericordia, Signor Gesù.*’

De Boteler had but imperfectly comprehended the words of the friar, but his impassioned manner and the ineffable sweetness expressed by voice and eye spoke to his heart. A tumult of remorseful feelings started up there, drowning all consciousness of the cold and dreary present, all care for his own safety. He stood erect while others lay prostrate, his whole soul absorbed in fierce debate with its own passions. His breast heaved convulsively, and scarcely knowing what he did, he pushed up the visor of his cap of mail in order to breathe more freely. The remembrance of the last two months, prayerless, reckless, unblest as they had been, seemed to crush him down, and the cry of the fallen spirit, 'Me miserable ! which way shall I fly ?' rose to his lips.

Alas ! poor Gawyne ! Man (less merciful than God) would shut the door of Heaven in thy face, and cut thee off from that sweet hope, without which faith and repentance cannot live. Yet even now (thou knowest it not) a pitying eye rests on thee. Francis from his pulpit marks the working of the fair young features, and as his wont is, breathes a momentary prayer for the stranger whom he may never behold again.

King John was the first to arise from the ground ; shaking the dust from his sable surcoat, he put himself at the head of a penitential procession, composed of his chaplains, chief captains, and counsellors. This being All Souls' Day, they were about to perambulate the camp, joined on their way by other

leaders and their followers. At certain stations where crosses had been erected, it was ordered that they should pause and recite the seven penitential Psalms. All were clothed in mourning garments, and many carried scourges in their hands; Brother Francis, declining the foremost place offered to him by King John, mixed with the throng.

The procession passed forth from the lists where they had assembled, and approached the spot where De Boteler stood riveted; as they came, they chanted '*Domine, ne in furore.*' They were preceded and accompanied (as every procession, whether grave or gay, has been and will be,) by a troop of idle gazers. Two or three of these drew up in front of Gawyne, and he started as a hand was clapped on his shoulder, and he felt the visor of his steel cap rudely closed. To feel for the sword which he no longer wore, was his first impulse; but a moment's recollection made it clear to him that the act, though uncereemonious, was friendly, and he looked up, wondering who in that throng cared for his safety. The persons next to him were whispering to one another in mirthful and indecorous fashion, not sparing coarse jests at the expense of various members of the procession. Surely his protector could not be one of these! yet their chief speaker, a little man wrapped from head to foot in a hooded cloak, did certainly glance towards De Boteler occasionally, and kept close to him, elbowing the Cypriote guards who would have thrust him away. 'Yonder comes your King of Jerusalem,' he

said, 'truly a second John Lackland, and in this, poorer than the first, that he hath a chief city, and may not set foot in it ; marry, I would not change my ass-head and cock's comb for such a kingdom as his !'

'Who is that follower of his highness?' asked another in the crowd, 'with corpse-like aspect and double-knotted scourge ? Tell me, jester, his name.'

'Oh, that is Foulques de Mauléon,' replied the nimble-tongued spokesman, lowering his voice ; 'a great lord and very scandalous sinner, but he hath since made amends for all by hunting up heretics, and racking them with his own hands ; see, the Dominican inquisitor and he walk side by side right lovingly ; look to your orthodoxy, my masters, for no quillet nor quiddet shall save you, if ye get into the court where they preside.'

The words, apparently uttered at random under cover of the privileged cap and bells, were intended for De Boteler and enforced by a significant jerk of the speaker's elbow. The jester's bauble dropped from his hand, he and Gawyne stooped at the same moment to pick it up, their eyes met, and Gawyne recognised Syr Tholomieu, fool to the Earl of Chester.

His start of joy had well-nigh betrayed him, but the jester pinched his arm, whispering in English, 'By Saint Momus, my patron, if thou look up thou art undone ; remain still, and utter not, till these blood suckers be past.'

The procession moved on slowly, for the king and many of the nobles who composed it, were languid from recent sickness. Foulques de Mauléon had hitherto escaped the scourge, but his bloodless face and tottering gait gave indications of disease within, and he must have fallen out of the ranks, had not the Dominican held him up with a strong arm. They passed out of sight two by two, the penitents came after, Brother Francis among them ; a 'meaner sort of bedesmen,' as one in the crowd remarked, now followed, and De Boteler might more safely look up and thank his humble friend for this deliverance. 'That very lord of Mauléon,' he said, 'did mightily persecute me, a nameless exile in Auvergne. Two years ago he deemed me one of the loathed Albigenes, and would have wrung my name and story from me by torture, had not a gentler judge interposed. Doubtless, 'twas he denounced me on Bartholmy feast to those dark Dominicans.'

Gawyne wrung the jester's hand as he spoke. Syr Tholomieu, albeit unused to the melting mood, seemed ready to laugh and cry at once.

'Good youth,' he answered, ''tis but requital of a kindly turn done years back ; remember you not when the poor fool, by babbling a state secret, got himself shut up in Oswestry Keep ? and Count Randle in hot anger commanded that he should have scanty food and plentiful whipping ? Thou didst befriend him then, thou and that maiden bright !'

‘Peace, fool!’ said Gawyne, turning his head away; ‘Yet speak,’ he added huskily, ‘is Sir Richard in the camp? Is he well? Is he alone?’

‘How should I know?’ answered the jester, putting on an air of testiness in order to ward off the terrible disclosure; ‘nay, if you bid me hold my peace, you shall find I can do it as well as another.’

How long Syr Tholomieu would have kept up this ‘bluster of feigned wrath’ it were hard to say, but its object was now summoned to the presence of Rabbi Simeon.

CHAPTER VII.

“There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.”

Shakspeare.

GAWYNE was led by a circuitous route to the door of the physician's oblong wooden hut, and entered it alone. He found there an old man with flowing white beard, and features of the noble Jewish type, walking slowly up and down. At the further end a lamp was burning on a bracket attached to the wall, and two young men, evidently of Jewish extraction, were seated at a table watching some chemical process by its light. The Rabbi himself paused before it, then resumed his walk, and encountered De Boteler.

The Englishman spoke first.

‘Art thou Simeon the Jew?’ he asked, ‘leech to his highness the King of Jerusalem? if so, I have a scroll for thy private hand.’

‘I am he,’ replied the old man, raising his dark blue eyes from the floor, and turning them on Gawyne with an astute yet troubled look. ‘Give me the scroll, my son, and rest on yonder cushions whilst I peruse it.’

Gawyne observed that the hand which received the scroll trembled.

‘Sir Leech,’ he said, ‘the Captain of the Mamelukes, who charged me with this writing for you, charged me also to obtain from you the elixir named therein, for his master and my benefactor, the Soldan. Be pleased to give it me quickly, for I would fain be gone.’

Simeon unfolded the scroll, read it in silence, then held it up for a moment, and stealthily to the light. ‘Said Hossein Bey no more to thee than this?’ he asked. The question was accompanied by a glance of keen suspicious inquiry.

‘Nothing,’ replied De Boteler; ‘he knew that I owed my freedom to the Soldan’s gentleness, and that to repay that prince in any way a Christian might, would be counted my dearest privilege.’

‘It is enough,’ rejoined the leech, and turning his back on De Boteler, he approached the lamp, ostensibly in order to peruse the scroll a second time. This, however, was not his real object. Uncovering a small bowl of metal, he sprinkled some of its contents over the writing; then with a slight start he muttered, ‘This is, of a truth, seething the kid in his mother’s milk! Hossein, thou and thy mates are framed of treachery! almost could I say, “O my soul, come not into their secret;” but it is too late, too late.’

Thus soliloquized this less hardened member of the dark triumvirate. His agitation was not unnoticed by Gawayne, who leaned with folded arms, and visor *once more* unclosed, against the door of the hut.

‘Methinks,’ he pondered to himself, ‘there is something crooked in this matter ; I like not that old man’s cold eye, nor the suspicious framing of his questions. He that is apt to deem other men deceivers may be a deceiver himself. See to it, Gawwyne, lest thou be befooled, and made the instrument of harm instead of good to noble Mel-edin.’

So cogitating, he crossed the hut with a rapid step, and laid his hand on the physician’s shoulder. The old man looked round in great and sudden trepidation, and endeavoured to secrete the scroll amid the folds of his loose robe ; but his unsteady fingers were no match for Gawwyne’s determined grasp, and before his acolytes could interpose, the Englishman had made himself master of the parchment. It hung wet and limp, soaked through with some colourless fluid ; at one end the broad characters traced upon it by Hossein Bey, were already fading, and others of a rusty brown and smaller dimensions had begun to be visible. Gawwyne saw that he had been duped, and resolved to sift the matter to the bottom.

‘Stand back, my masters,’ he cried to the acolytes, whom he saw cautiously advancing towards him. ‘Stand back, I say ! think ye I would harm an old grey-headed man ?’

They were youths of unwarlike mien and studious habits, and De Boteler’s hint to them to remain neutral, agreed too well with their own inclinations to be neglected ; so they sat down and resumed their

occupations, stealing side-long glances occasionally towards the master and his unwelcome visitant.

‘Young gentleman,’ stammered the Jew, cowering and shrinking under Gawayne’s hold, ‘the matter in hand is indeed secret, but not therefore traitorous. To deal with you plainly, it appertains to a treaty now set on foot betwixt our valiant King John and that same Mameluke ; a treaty wherefrom your cause (our cause rather) may suck no small profit ; his highness, finding me versed in the tongues of these infidels, does but intrust the penning of the matter to me. Rest content, therefore, that no dishonesty can lurk in dealings to which he consents.’

But De Boteler could not and would not rest content ; on the contrary, the glozing of the Jew, and his familiarity with the chemical means by which writing might be effaced or restored, increased his suspicions. He coldly answered, ‘I will sift the matter for myself ;’ and trimming the lamp, which burnt dim, held the scroll as near the flame as was safe. Letter after letter, and word after word, leaped into light, till the kindly warmth had supplied all that was lacking.

The Jew watched De Boteler intently, the livid hue of fear spreading over his face as he did so ; but when he saw the characters stand out clearly, and gathered from Gawayne’s speaking countenance that they were absolutely unintelligible to him, a gleam of triumph mingled with the fear.

‘Now, young Sir,’ he said, stretching out his hand, ‘in courtesy, give me that scroll ; although time presses, I am willing to humour your suspicious fancy by construing it to you before I tender it to my royal master.’

‘Thanks for the proffered construction, old man,’ replied De Boteler ; ‘false, doubtless, as thine own heart, and those of thy mates in treason ! No ; this parchment shall be laid before King John, by some more loyal hand than thine. He will find an interpreter.’

Gawyne deliberately folded up the scroll and laid it within his vest. As he spoke, he looked steadily on the aged deceiver, so noble in feature, so abject in spirit. He saw gestures pass between him and one of the acolytes, and judged rightly that they meditated violence, yet durst not carry it out into act. There was a pause, he standing resolutely at bay, they watching him with faces sharpened by malice and apprehension.

A great stillness had reigned in the camp since the passing by of the procession ; its mournful and monotonous chanting had died away in the distance, and so had the hum of the idlers that followed it. The few men-at-arms left behind had either stretched themselves on the ground to rest their weak and nerveless limbs, or were sauntering about, engaged in desultory talk on the events of the hour.

As they talked, a sudden uproar was heard in the direction which the penitents had taken. It rose

and swelled upon the ear, growing more distinct till shouts and loud wailings could both be heard. Presently footsteps, and a clank of armed men running were distinguishable, and then many figures came in sight, hurrying forward by twos or threes, in a state of wild excitement. A large compact body of men-at-arms followed, with naked weapons gleaming in their hands. All were bound for one spot, the hut of Simeon the Jew. One cry was on the lips of all ‘Foulques de Mauléon is poisoned ! vengeance, vengeance on his poisoner !’ ‘Vengeance on the Jew !’ ‘Let us hang him up to his own roof !’

So crying, the rabble burst the frail door of the chamber where Simeon and De Boteler stood. At the first alarm, the Jew had shrunk behind Gawyne in speechless agony ; Gawyne, touched with some pity for his grey hairs, signed to him to escape through a back door as his pupils had already done, and covered his retreat by asking, ‘What has chafed you, my masters ? If this old man have offended, let the law judge him ; King John is just ; seek to him for redress.’

A scornful laugh from one of the ringleaders cut him short. ‘We are our own judges,’ replied the man, ‘and come hither to avenge Foulques de Mauléon, who is poisoned ; as he fell, he cried out on Simeon the leech for his murderer ; quick, brothers, that the soul of this accursed Jew go before his to doom !’ So saying, he pressed on, followed by as many as the hut would contain.

De Boteler looked round, not without hope that the miserable man might have escaped ; a respite of a few moments might suffice to save his life, by giving time for the arrival of King John, his protector ; but it was not to be ; one glance through a chink in the rude door had made it plain to Simeon, that to venture forth would be instant death. The hut was surrounded, and the cry, ' Hang up the Jew ! hang him at his own roof tree ! ' resounded from a hundred voices, some deep, some shrill.

Despair gave the victim courage, and rising from his crouching position at De Boteler's feet, he faced the incensed soldiery. ' Not that death, I pray you, brethren,' he said, with beseeching hands. ' I refuse not, though in this matter guiltless, to die, but spare a son of Abraham the infamy of such a death.'

' How now, the dog-Jew is dainty ! ' cried a leader of the rabble, who saw symptoms of relenting amongst his followers ; give me yonder cord, Thibault, quick ! What man deserves infamy, if not he who feigns himself Christian while Jew at heart, thereby cozening rich gifts and offices of trust from our good King John ?

The speech touched all hearts, inflaming them to madness ; even De Boteler, better instructed and more compassionate by nature, recoiled from Simeon's agonized clutch ; ' Aye, leave me, leave me,' the old man groaned, ' for in this matter I am verily guilty ; like Achan the son of Zeres, for a wedge of gold and

a Babylonish garment I sold mine integrity, therefore hath this evil come upon me.'

The halter was now ready, and Thibault and his ruthless companions were preparing to adjust it round Simeon's throat, when he frantically shook them off. 'Not thus, not thus,' he groaned; and stooping down, he lifted a weighty sack from the table, and emptied its contents, a dark metallic powder, upon the floor. In another instant he had seized the lamp, and applied its flame to the powder. There was a hush, a breathless moment of wonder and bewilderment, then a flash of white light shot up to the roof; another, and another followed, heralding quick, stunning reports. The ground appeared to rock under their feet, the roof and walls of the hut were rent in pieces as by a whirlwind, and corpses and shattered limbs were strewn on every side. The survivors fled in terror, trampling in their flight on dead and dying, and filling the air with shrieks.

Had not the unhappy Jew thrust De Boteler from him with extraordinary vehemence, he must have perished in the explosion. As it was, he was uplifted from the ground, and flung to a considerable distance. There he lay scorched, and for a while wholly unconscious. When by degrees his senses returned, he felt a heavy weight upon his chest, and perceived that he was half buried under a mass of shattered palisades, and that *across* him lay a man yet quivering in the agonies

of death. It was the ruffian who had pressed forward to act the part of hangman towards Simeon, and whose fierce spirit had thus unexpectedly accompanied that of his victim to the bar of doom. He lay there so shattered, that none could have recognized him except by the rope still grasped by both hands. Gawyne opened his eyes, and tried to raise himself up, but in vain ; so great was the pressure upon him, that it took some time to extricate his arms, and when that had been achieved, to disencumber himself from his ghastly load. Nor could he at once collect his thoughts, or realize that he was indeed in the land of the living. That fiery death scattered around him on every side, the stifling smell, the sounds as of—

‘ Horrid groans,
And dismal moans,
And cries of tortured ghosts.’

which accompanied it, made him fully believe himself on the threshold of the other world. Raising himself to his knees with difficulty, he shook off some of the choking heap of rubbish, and drew in a deep draught of air. He once more saw the sky overhead grey and hazy, yet glorious in its boundless height ; one object only came between it and his dazzled sight, and that was the tall cross with the awful Form represented thereon, bending, as it were, towards him with loving outstretched arms. He gazed up to it till his straining eyes grew dim ; the upper air

appeared to be thronged with bright indistinct forms, and full of rustling wings ; words chanted by his mother over his cradle bed, came forth from the recesses of memory, and seemed to float around him with a melody long unheard.

“Like as the Heaven is,
Above the earth out spread,
So endless is His ruth
To such as Him do dread.”

So sang the voice, conjured up by Gawyne's wandering and excited fancy. To him the visionary strain sounded so sweet, that he would fain have prolonged its echo ; but that might not be ! Consciousness *would* return, and with it a remembrance of his position, of the mission which he had come thither to perform, and of the strange awful manner in which it had been frustrated. ‘What was to be done next ?’ he asked himself, and as the best answer to that question, he explored within his vest for the Mameluke's mysterious scroll. There it lay uninjured, though the vest was soiled and the smell of fire had passed upon it. The hidden characters brought to light by Simeon's agency were now quite distinct, though their meaning was hidden from De Boteler. He gazed upon them for a few moments, doubtful whether it might not be best to destroy the document at once, but soon returned to his former resolve, that of consigning it to the King of Jerusalem, whom more than any one else it must con-

cern. This done, the sooner he left the precincts of the camp, the better.

A number of brethren of the hospital, headed by their Grand-Master, gallant de Montaigu, had ere this reached the scene of the catastrophe. While others shrank from the place as accurst, these men, strong in faith and courage, adventured themselves among the smoking rubbish, and conveyed thence the wounded and the dead. The multitude, whose fury had for a time given way to terror, stood sullenly by, watching their labours ; soon, however, their rage was kindled afresh by the sight of one of Simeon's acolytes, half dead with fear, but otherwise uninjured, whom the brethren had discovered and were carrying to the tent of John of Brienne. They would fain have torn him to pieces as an accomplice in his master's supposed poisonings ; but de Montaigu, with his lordly and reverend presence, kept them at bay, and happily, at that critical juncture, the king arrived with a goodly array of warriors. Hearing of the uproar, he had reluctantly left the expiring Foulques de Mauléon, and hastened back to quell it. The two chiefs soon succeeded in restoring some appearance of discipline ; and the hospitallers resumed their task, while their Grand-Master and John of Brienne sought the royal pavilion in order to investigate the cause of Simeon's death. His remains had been discovered so completely shattered as to be a terror and wonder to all beholders.

This was the aspect of affairs when two of the brethren reached the spot where De Boteler lay ; one of them at his urgent entreaty brought him a reviving draught of water, and both united their efforts to set him free ; they worked, according to their rule, in unbroken silence, but with hearty zeal ; and satisfaction beamed in their weather-beaten faces, when Gawyne leaped up, and showed himself unhurt. At his request, they pointed out to him the royal tent, and the elder of them volunteered by signs to introduce him into it. De Boteler gladly accepted this offer, as tending to clear away the difficulties that might hinder his access to the king.

None such however, existed ; John of Brienne was at all times unsuspicious to a fault, and regardless of personal danger, though as a leader wary and politic. Moreover, the late disturbance had caused a general confusion, and men now came and went into the royal presence-chamber with no regard to etiquette whatever. It seemed quite full, and Gawyne, despairing of obtaining a private interview, resolved to trust for concealment to his closed visor, and to rid him of his errand at once. He followed the hospitaller through the narrow entrance into the spacious pavilion, and stood, not without awe, in the presence of the chivalrous king.

This, then, was he, who in boyhood had been condemned to the seclusion of the cloister, but who had fled from the monastery where his father would have immured him ; this was he, whose glorious youth

and manhood were the theme of minstrels, and whom the Barons of Palestine with one accord had summoned from the French court to fill their vacant throne. Though past the prime of life, he had joyfully accepted the throne, not for himself, but as husband and guardian of the orphan Mary of Jerusalem, to whom it had descended. He had maintained its honour, and the rights of his young bride, with unflinching valour, though not always with success; at the siege of Acre, on the plain of Esdraelon, and now under Damietta walls, the infidels had learnt to dread his name, and Paynim mothers used it to frighten their wayward children, as they had done that of Richard Cœur-de-Lion twenty years before.

The king, as we have already said, wore a sable surcoat over his suit of armour. On his head was a helmet of burnished steel, surmounted by a small gold coronal, to mark his royal pre-eminence. On the white canopy of the chair of state which he occupied, were wrought the armorial ensigns of his kingdom, a cross-potent, *or*, between four smaller crosses, representing the five wounds of our Lord. The words 'Deus Vult' were embroidered on the scroll above.* John of Brienne's ample forehead was

* An old writer tells us that the reason for thus placing the charges of gold on a field of white or silver (in defiance of the heraldic rule) is to be found in Psalm lxviii. 13 :-- 'Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, which is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.'

marked with deeper lines of care than usual, as he sat in earnest discussion with the Grand-Master. A soldier stood before them, whom Gawyne recognised as the henchman who had previously guarded him ; the man was apparently giving his evidence, for De Boteler heard him say : ‘So please you, Sire, we stood without, my Cypriotes and I, while this stranger and the leech conferred together. Presently the rabble rout came up, crying, “Vengeance, vengeance against the poisoner !” ’Twere easier, your highness knows, to quell the hurricane by speaking it fair than to rule an angry multitude ; some of my comrades fled, some joined the cry and helped them to break in the door ; I threw myself amongst them, prayed, threatened, but in vain ; they bore me along with them into that accursed den. All was confusion from that time ; I but remember that Simeon clung to the stranger, praying the while to his foes for mercy, that at the sight of a halter he cried aloud, then waxed desperate, and, as I think, called on foul fiends for help. Then the ground clave at his feet, and they whom he called to, came and helped him. There were strange lightnings and thunderings, and a great smoke arose, and the evil ones carried Simeon aloft, so that we saw him no more. The hut was rent in pieces, and many were smitten, and doubtless the stranger perished with them !’

The hospitaller meanwhile had returned to his labours, after whispering a few words in the ear of *de Montaigu*. The Grand-Master beckoned to

Gawyne to draw near, which he did, to the utter amazement and consternation of the bewildered henchman. He, as beseemed an esquire, bent him reverently before the two grey-haired chiefs, then besought, if it might be, brief private conference with King John. 'His errand,' he added, 'was not altogether foreign to the matter in hand, seeing that it concerned a correspondence between Simeon the leech, and the captain of the Soldan's Mamelukes.'

'If so, it brooks no delay,' exclaimed King John. 'We will bid clear our tent at once, praying, however, our dear brother-in-arms, the Grand-Master of St. John, to remain by us, unless you, young gentlemen, take exception to his presence.'

'I hold myself honoured by standing in that presence,' replied De Boteler, whose enthusiasm for all that is good and great no adversity could extinguish; then remembering how precious each moment might be, he at once tendered the scroll to John of Brienne, on slightly bended knee. The king and Grand-Master examined it narrowly, and inquired how it had come into De Boteler's hands. He answered them briefly, but with perfect openness, sketching rapidly his enforced flight from the Christian camp, the manner in which he had become Hossein Bey's captive, the Soldan's generous treatment of him, his eager desire to requite his benefactor! He described more particularly Simeon's reception of him, and the manner in which he had detected the Jew's clandestine dealing with Hossein Bey. When questioned

as to the closing act of Simeon's life, he expressed his conviction that the wretched man was wrongfully suspected of poisoning, in this case at least, and that Foulques de Mauléon's death had taken him wholly by surprise. As to the explosion, he pretended not to account for that horrible mystery, secretly attributing it, as the henchman did, to the agency of demons. So, probably, did his hearers, until the Grand-Master broke in upon his recital with the exclamation, 'Ha! a sack of dark powder, said'st thou? he was ever at work striving to achieve some compound that might out-do the hellish Greek fire! perchance this gear appertained thereto—let us examine Manasses, his acolyte, touching the matter, so please your highness.'

'I have already summoned him and his fellow for that end,' replied John de Brienne, 'but first they shall decypher this scroll, each of them apart, that there be no fraud; for well I wot Manasses is crafty and farsighted as Achitophel.'

The elder acolyte was now introduced, and De Boteler conceiving that his duty was accomplished, would have withdrawn, but a sign from the king arrested his steps. The scroll was at once unrolled, and Manasses the Jew called upon to read it, which he did with much trepidation and reluctance. It was written in a cypher devised by Simeon, and understood only by himself and his confidential associates, and its contents were as follows:—

‘ To Simeon the physician, greeting from his confederates ; “ a threefold cord,” saith Solomon, your prophet, “ is not quickly broken.” So be it betwixt us, that slaves, lands, and gold may be ours. All is ready ; before sunrise on the fourth day from this, Saf-edîn shall be proclaimed through the camp ; apprise your king of this, that his promised help fail us not at that hour. As for that whereof you wrote, fear nothing ; there shall be no open violence towards Mel-edîn, only according to your prescription such a warm bath as shall lull him to endless sleep. My Mamelukes are better affected towards him than I had deemed, therefore a guard of Koords shall be set that night round his pavilion. The minstrel page hath prying eyes ; if ye send me a potent draft wherewith to drug him, you shall do well ; the Christian by whose hand I send this, is also one whom I love not ; I have charged my crafty Turcoman to bind him with links of iron as soon as he shall have performed this my behest. Detain him not needlessly, for time presses, and the puppet whom we would set on the throne, will not quit Mansoura without farther assurance of help from your king. Also, rumour saith, the Soldan of Damascus and a great host with him, draw near ; we must strike the blow before Saf-edîn hear of this, lest his heart fail him ; so fare you well—’

Words cannot paint the indignation of John of Brienne, as the base and murderous details of this conspiracy broke upon him. He paced the tent with

rapid and uneven steps, pausing ever and anon to explain : ‘ Now by our Lady, a most foul plot ! O Simeon, thou wast the subtlest traitor that ever breathed ; how hast thou cozened me with fair words, avouching that all in this treaty was just and honest ; my soul long recoiled from it, but the influence of Pelagio, and the hope of great advantage to our cause, won me over.* Ah, de Montaigu, thou wast ever set against all alliance with infidels ; would I had hearkened to thee and to brave Austria in this matter ! ’

The more cautious Grand-Master now drew near John of Brienne, and led him to an inner compartment of the pavilion, where they remained some time in consultation. Meanwhile De Boteler was left to his own thoughts, for which Hossein Bey’s letter had furnished abundant food. His wrath and scorn at having been made a tool for such base purposes equalled those of Simeon’s royal dupe, and he burnt with impatience to return to the Soldan’s headquarters, to defeat Hossein’s schemes, to save the gentle ‘ Bul-bul,’ and to warn his master against the impending peril. Every moment’s delay chafed and fretted him, and the hour which elapsed before he was again summoned to the king appeared an age. He

* Strange as it may appear, contemporary writers assure us that many crusading leaders and prelates did not scruple to serve their own interests by entering into private negotiations with the Saracens.

soon discovered, however, that the interval of time had not been wasted.

The chiefs had submitted Hossein's letter to Simeon's younger acolyte, and thus ascertained the accuracy of his colleague's reading of it. Manasses had been straitly examined before a council assembled in haste, and the threat of torture had extracted from him many particulars tending to prove how grossly Simeon had abused the confidence of his royal patron. Manasses, it appeared, had abetted his frauds and forgeries, in the hope of sharing his unlawful gains. He had therefore justly forfeited his life, which was only spared on condition that he should bear to the weak and wavering Sef-edin at Mansoura a message from the King of Jerusalem, breaking off all communication with him, and clearly setting before him the bloody designs of the traitors with whom he was leagued. At de Montaignu's suggestion, Manasses also wrote a letter to the Soldan of Damascus, exposing the plot against his brother's life, and clearing the Christian chiefs of all participation in so base a scheme. A trusty person was sent with this despatch to meet the Soldan near El-Arish. A party was at the same time sent to arrest De Boteler's perfidious escort. Nor was this all; it appeared from the statement of Manasses, that a large number of Saracen chiefs were well affected towards the Sultan, and ignorant of his danger. Hossein and his accomplices had devised various means of ridding themselves of these men by detaching a large reinforce-

ment to Damietta. It was needful that they should be warned without an instant's delay not to leave the camp at this juncture. Manasses was at no loss to find agents through whom this warning might be promptly conveyed, and De Boteler, intensely anxious for the safety, not of Mel-edin only, but of his minstrel page, prayed for leave to accompany them to the Moslem camp. John de Brienne granted his request at once, graciously offering him a present of armour and accoutrements, which however, Gawyne declined. 'Rusty hauberk, and shirt of sack-cloth,' he said, with a touch of proud sadness in his voice, 'best befit a nameless man.'

'Nameless thou mayest be, fair youth,' replied the royal Paladin, 'yet deem thyself not therefore unknown, nor the watch-tower on Nile forgot. Now fare thee well, Tristan the left-handed, till such time as the distractions of this camp are healed!' He waved his hand courteously.

De Boteler bowed low. 'God send the day may come,' he said, 'and that soon, when Tristan shall stand with uncovered face before your highness.'

By sunset, the party, with Gawyne at its head, had mounted, and quitted the Christian camp as privately as might be; the rising stars saw them at the gate of Mansoura.

* * * * *

Late in the evening of December 4th, Mel-edin and his train joined the main body of his army, encamped as we have seen, within a few hours' march

of the Christian host. The Soldan's tent was pitched, and after bathing, as was his wont, and hearing a portion of the Koran read to him by his chief Imaum, he went to rest. He had dismissed Hossein Bey, whose obsequious attentions had begun to pall upon him, an hour earlier than usual, and the conspirator had availed himself of this unwonted leisure to seek a final conference with his Koord ally. They expected each moment the return of the Turcoman, bearing a despatch from Simeon, and Hossein looked with vindictive satisfaction to that of Gawyne de Boteler, a prisoner and wholly at his mercy. It had been announced that the passive usurper, Saf-edin, with his mother, was on his way to the camp from Mansoura, ostensibly with the view of paying homage to his brother; thus everything appeared to be in train for the great revolution, which, in less than twelve hours, they hoped to effect.

The Soldan meanwhile tossed on his luxurious couch, with aching limbs and a spirit opprest. His ears still rang with the word just read from the Koran, 'Say, "O God, who possessest the kingdom; Thou givest the kingdom to whom Thou wilt, and Thou takest away the kingdom from whom Thou wilt; in Thy Hand is all good, for Thou art Almighty."' As he pondered over this sentence of the prophet, sleep appeared to recede further and further from his eyelids, till at midnight, weary of the unusual labour of thinking, he extended his right hand, and languidly struck one or two chords

of a lute that lay near him. This melodious signal brought the Bul-bul to his side at once. 'O child of song,' said Mel-edin, all unheeding the pale and perturbed countenance of the boy, 'my soul is full of unrest, and sleep that comes to the blurred leper comes not to me ; do thou, therefore, recite in mine ear some high deed of my father's house ; but look thy strain be new.'

The child mused a moment, then bending one knee, and crossing his hands on his breast, made answer : 'Thy servant, O perfect king, will recite one of the countless noble deeds of Saladin the Great, one, that methinks, hath scarce reached thy royal ear ; may the echo of thy servant's voice be soothing to thy soul as the bunches of immortal poppies which bloom in Eden.' His voice trembled, not so much from fear as from inward hidden excitement, and his blue eyes repeatedly explored the dark corners of the pavilion, as seen by the soft light of a swinging lamp. It gleamed brightly on some of the strange forms which represented the signs of the Zodiac, leaving others in deep shadow. Seeing the Soldan wax more restless, the minstrel collected his thoughts and thus began :—

'It came to the ear of Saladin, lord of the East, that in the princely hospital at Jerusalem, where those monkish warriors, called brethren of St. John, once nursed their sick, no request of any sick man was ever denied. Were he king or beggar, Frank or Moslem, once under their fostering care, no request

of his might be denied ! “Nay but I will see with mine own eyes,” said the mighty Saladin, “whether this thing be so ! By the holy stone of Mecca, I will see for myself.” Three days later, a Syrian peasant, in squalid attire, was found lying at the gate of the hospital whose nurses are princes, and its meanest servants knights of spotless descent. They laid the peasant on a couch as white as snow, and tended him as a mother tends her first-born. They brought him cakes of finest wheat flour, and flesh of kid in a lordly dish, but he would not eat ; so passed the first day, the second, the third, and still he would not eat ! The brethren saw his strength fail, and his heart faint, and they besought him to eat, but he only shook his head. Then said they, breaking silence in this sore perplexity, “Brother, since our cates mislike you, say if there be aught else in air or earth, in pool or salt sea, that your sick fancy could be pleased withal ; speak, and if gold can purchase it, it shall be yours.” Then said the peasant, all unwillingly, “In very truth, my masters, there is but one dainty in all the earth that my soul would not loathe ; but if I tell you what it is, ye will stone me !” “Nay, but we will not stone thee,” they all with one voice made answer ; “speak freely, good brother.” Then did he confess that the cate his soul longed for, was a haunch of the Grand-Master’s favourite battle-steed, to be cut off in his, the sick man’s, own presence ! The brethren looked very blank on one another, when they heard this un-

natural request ; then went a Donat to de Duisson their Grand-Master, and told him all. "By every saint in the calendar," quoth he, "I would liefer have cut off mine own right leg, nevertheless, for the honour of our Order, be it as the beggar desireth !" So the war-horse was led out, and stood in the sick man's presence, and a goodly sight it was to see him arching his proud neck, and pawing the ground, and champing the bit till his coat of raven black was flecked with white foam ; then the peasant looked out, and he said, "I pray you, my masters, do no harm to the good steed ; the very granting of my desire hath quenched it, and I would not see him maimed for the half of my kingdom." At those words the brethren looked strangely on him and on one another, but none spake, and the peasant went forth from their gates in peace. And ever after, Saladin, lord of the East, was heard to aver that he 'loved with a special love those noble Nazarenes who had thought no offering too costly to be laid on the shrine of hospitality.'

'In sooth, that tale is new to me,' said the Soldan, graciously, 'and pleases my humour well, albeit it redounds as much to the honour of the unbelievers as of mine ancestor ; I think, boy, thou lovest the Nazarenes ?'

'I love one Nazarene well,' replied the boy, with glowing cheeks ; 'and thou, O king, would'st love him also, could'st thou but know'—he would have

said more, but the sound of a low call without the pavilion arrested his speech.

He hastened to the entrance ; strange sight in that Moslem camp, *there* was a Christian, impelled by honour and gratitude, watching over the Soldan's life at the risk of his own ! 'The time is come,' said De Boteler. 'Prince Saf-edin is here, and will not resign his claim ; his mother urges him on, and Hossein and the Koord will proclaim him Soldan within an hour, except your master show himself ! If he shrink, all is lost—if he speak boldly, all is well. For the love of Heaven urge him to speed, for the traitors draw near apace !'

The Bul-bul returned at once to his lord, and casting himself at his feet, spoke in a firm though supprest tone ; 'There is treachery, O Mel-edin ! arise and quell it by thy majestic presence—suffer Yusuf and thy servant to gird on thine armour, that not a moment be lost.' Yusuf, a true-hearted young Georgian, had entered the tent, and the two now arrayed their royal master in armour of proof ; he stood passive under their hands, until the page presented him with a scymetar, not the jewelled one borne by him on state occasions, but a weapon of black Damascus steel and keenest temper. 'Good,' he murmured, feeling its edge, 'very good ; now say, boy, are the proofs of treason clear ? are the traitors, as thou didst bid me believe, Hossein and Emad-edin ?'

‘Even so, great king,’ replied the page, rejoicing and astonished at his master’s calmness and energy ; ‘this scroll, brought by the Christian whom thy clemency freed four days since, declares all !’

‘Hossein, who hath eaten of my salt !’ continued the Soldan, dreamily ; then rousing himself he advanced towards the tent-door. The minstrel held up its curtain. ‘A throng of Emirs without, wait but your highness’s beck to fall upon the traitors,’ he said ; ‘I beseech your majesty, speak to them.’ A crowd of turbaned heads was visible without, torch-light flashing on the polished arms, eager glittering eyes, and swarthy complexions. The Emirs were mounted ; the Soldan’s white charger stood ready saddled and bridled, with Yusuf at his head.

Mel-edin set his foot in the stirrup ; then paused in all the anguish of irresolution ; ‘The scroll is here, sayest thou ?’ he asked his page. ‘Read it quick, that I may know all my foes.’ Quivering with impatience, the Bul-bul rehearsed the contents of the scroll ; his master listened at first with fixed eye, and look of kindling resolve, but at the name of Saf-edin, a great trembling fell upon him.

‘Saf-edin, my father’s son ?’ he asked, hoarsely ; ‘is it so ? are my foes of mine own household ?’

‘It is even so, O king,’ replied a loyal emir, pressing forward ; ‘all the more need their treason should be punished ; by the name of Allah, I adjure you, give the word !’

But the unhappy Soldan spoke not. Vanquished by that constitutional infirmity of purpose, which alone hindered him from rivalling his ancestor Saladin in glory, he stared vacantly round, then staggered back into the arms of his attendants. The page cast one despairing look towards De Boteler, murmuring, 'Leave us not ! we shall yet need your help !' then, with bitter anguish, led the Soldan back to his couch, and closed the tent-door against the scornful or indignant gaze of Mel'edîn's subjects.

The strange and most unlooked for 'dénouement' of this dark plot will be best told in the words of the historian of the Crusades. 'The Soldan,' says Michaud, 'obtained timely notice of the conspiracy against him, and quitted his camp at midnight, but a few hours before it was to have been carried out. At day-break the conspirators became aware that their schemes were discovered ; they made every effort to induce the army to revolt, and frightful confusion arose in the camp ; some of the emirs rallied round Emad-edîn, and swore that they would share his fortunes ; others remained neutral ; a considerable number vowed to defend Meledîn. While this uncertainty prevailed, a groundless fear lest the Christians should attack them at this juncture, spread itself through the length and breadth of the Moslem host. This fear grew into panic terror ; the soldiers abandoned their tents and baggage, and rushed precipitately on the track of their fugitive Soldan.

‘This retreat, for which the Christians could assign no visible cause, and which, therefore, was attributed by them to the miraculous hand of God, opened to the crusading host the long-desired passage of the Nile ; they took advantage of it at once, crossed the river, made themselves masters of the Mussulman camp, with an enormous amount of booty, and pitched their tents close under the walls of Damietta.’

May it not be said of this strange chapter in history, that truth is more improbable than fiction ?

‘The terror,’ continues Michaud, ‘which had infected the Saracen troops, did not spread to the defenders of Damietta ; this intrepid garrison made a diversion in their Soldan’s favour, which enabled his host to recover from its temporary panic. The Soldan of Damascus speedily came to his brother’s assistance ; Emad-edîn and other heads of the revolt were taken and loaded with irons, and Meledîn’s power was established on a firmer basis than before.’

CHAPTER VIII.

‘ Away ! nor let me loiter in my song,
For we have many a mountain path to tread,
And many a varied shore to sail along,
By pensive sadness, not by fiction, led.


Childe Harold.

WE turn from the muddy and plague-stricken camp before Damietta to a very different scene : the Grecian Archipelago lies before us with its emerald isles, and blue and murmuring sea. Small waves play softly on the beach of a rocky island ; it seems, at first sight, composed of grey beetling cliffs, the homes of thousands of sea-birds, but a nearer inspection reveals to the inquiring eye glimpses of green vale and upland protected by this stony girdle. A cluster of ivy huts is built under its shadow. From these on the calm autumn evening, stream forth the younger inhabitants, youths, maidens, and children, bent on closing the day with song and dance.

The Romaika, graceful relic of classical days, is the chosen pastime. They join hands, and form a ring on the firm and shining sea-sand. At first they move slowly round, timing their steps to the sound of a pastoral pipe ; but by degrees their movements grow more animated and more intricate, till

the eye of the stranger is baffled in attempting to follow them. At length, like the Cretan labyrinth, of which the Romaika is thought to be a representation, it becomes a maze, to be followed only by the initiated. The gay turbans, glittering black eyes, and naked feet of the dancers, gleam cheerily through deepening twilight; and the sea, with 'many twinkling smile' and pleased murmur, washes up to the very scene of their rural festivity. Poverty, lack of food, the griping rule of an avaricious lord, are all forgot by the light-hearted Greeks at this moment.

A maiden of taller and slighter form than her companions, sat on a grey stone watching their evolutions. When urged to join them, she shook her head with a smile and in sweet, though broken accents, pleaded her ignorance of the dance. She might, with equal truth, have pleaded a mind ill at ease, and a heart beating high with mingled anxiety and hope; for yonder, in a sheltered cove, lies the boat which in a few hours should convey her and hers from the solitary shore of Patmos. All is ready; she waits but her father's return to embark, and see, he comes, descending in company with two men, one a grey friar, from the steep eminence on the crest of which, St. John's monastic fortress is perched. Rosamond (for need we say that it was she?) rose, and addressed herself to climbing the path by which Sir Richard was approaching. She paused on a kind of natural terrace overhanging the sea, at a height of about seventy feet. It commanded a distant view of



several islands, all of them greener and softer in outline than that on which she stood. Behind her was the mouth of a cave, one of those in which tradition tells, that the beloved Apostle 'heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty,' during his banishment to Patmos. It was partly concealed by a thicket of dwarf-oak, intermixed with long shoots of a kind of wild-rose that drooped over it. The unusual depth of earth on this terrace, and its southeasterly aspect, were favourable to vegetation, and so created a tiny patch of verdure to refresh the mariner's eye as he neared that frowning coast. The shrubs grew at their own wild will, save in one strip of ground six feet long, which had been recently disturbed. Here the English girl knelt down, and offered her brief parting prayer.

'Farewell, poor Ivo!' she said, rising to go, yet lingering as on haunted and hallowed ground. 'The all-pitying Father, who knows our weakness, heard thy cry, and rescued thy dust from the churlish deep; we leave thee in a holy spot: thy face is turned towards Jerusalem, the moaning sea chants a never-ceasing dirge at thy feet, and perchance one of the angel host that spake with blessed Saint John may tarry here sometimes and guard thy sleep.'

Strange hap that the Cheshire boy should be laid to his last rest on the cliffs of Patmos; that the strong arm, which had learnt to twang the bow by Bolyn brook, should moulder back to dust in the far-off Grecian Archipelago! Yet not strange, for at

that era the bones of pilgrims whitened every shore in the Levant, and daily life was full of wilder adventure than would now be admissible in the pages of a romance.

After the water-spout, which we described awhile back, had spent its fury on the doomed spedal-ship, it dispersed, leaving a shattered wreck at the mercy of fierce winds and waves. Many of the trembling crew took refuge on the forepart of the vessel, and, as we have seen, were immediately rescued ; but the group whom we left stationed near the helm were less fortunate. The stern of the ship had sustained the whole violence of the water-spout, and several planks hanging loosely together, but severed from the main body of the vessel, were the only refuge to which Rosamond, Ivo, and their fellow-passengers could cling. It was a moment of terrible anguish when they saw that succour from the fleet was impossible, and felt themselves drifting further and further with the speed of an arrow. But the struggle was brief ; the gale speedily abated, and before night closed in they were picked up by a small vessel bound for Samos. Her owners showed them no little kindness ; and willingly consented, for the small sum which Sir Richard Fytton had it in his power to offer, to land him and his companions on the coast of Candia. The Minorite Angelo of Pisa, had a rich and powerful friend in that island, who, he doubted not, would expedite their further voyage to *Damietta*.

And Ivo, how fared he? The excitement and hardship, attendant on the wreck, had rather tended to fan than extinguish his small spark of life. Rosamond, so soon as she had recovered consciousness and strength, tended him with pitying care, for the love of his mother.

Fra Angelo ministered both to mind and body, and, by God's grace, so strengthened within him all patient and forgiving tempers, that this unlooked-for calamity proved in the end greatly for his soul's health.

A severe disappointment awaited our wanderers on their approach to Candia. They learned that it had recently passed into the power of Venice. The little Greek vessel was searched by Venetian officers, and her passengers viewed with extreme suspicion and forbidden to land. To this arbitrary decree Sir Richard would have offered a stout resistance, had not the Minorite convinced him of the impolicy of doing so; he explained to his new English friend that ever since Constantinople had been wrested from the Greek emperors, sixteen years before, by Venice, that republic had been mistress of the whole Grecian Archipelago.* Her merchant-princes proved pitiless rulers and tax-gatherers in those lovely islands. They manifested a jealous distrust of strangers, whom

* Constantinople was taken by the Latins in 1203, and Baldwin of Flanders elected the first Latin Emperor. The Greek empires of Lascaris, at Nice, and Komnenos, at Trebisonde, arose from the ruins of the Byzantine dynasty.

in repeated instances they had treated as spies, and punished with death or imprisonment. 'We are wholly in their power,' continued the Franciscan 'and have none to do us right should they incline to violence ; it lies, therefore, with our safety to conciliate them.'

'Tis hard,' replied Sir Richard, gloomily. 'Oh ! 'tis gall and bitterness to think of Earl Randle at Damietta and this poor arm powerless to strike a blow by his side ; thou knowest not, good brother, the rankling of such a wound as this !'

'I am not the stock or stone you believe me,' rejoined Angelo, mildly, a faint colour diffusing itself over his thin face, 'nor, Sir Knight, do I advocate mean truckling to these traffickers ; only let us endeavour patiently to extricate ourselves from the toils which, if we struggle, will wreath the closer round us—for yonder lady's sake,' he added 'I urge this course.'

'Thou art right, brother,' answered the Englishman, frankly extending his hand, 'and I was wrong, inasmuch as the safety of my helpless child is bound up in mine : now say what remedy for this evil plight of ours ?'

'Methinks,' said Angelo, after some consideration, 'we had best write on parchment a brief summary of our names and callings, and the events which brought us to these shores. This, with a request for instant aid in our voyage to Damietta, we will, so *please* you, send by a sure hand to the Governor of

the Cyclades, Senator Sanuto. Such frank dealing should, methinks, disarm the suspiciousness even of a Venetian.'

'What manner of person may this Sanuto be?' inquired Sir Richard, to whom the plan approved itself as the best which, under the circumstances, could be devised. 'Is he a man from whom justice may be obtained?'

The Minorite shook his head; 'Sanuto is one who without remorse grinds the faces of the poor; he has by trading, heaped together much wealth, and bought the principedom of the Cyclades; for fifteen years has the cry of those oppressed isles gone up to Heaven against him, seemingly in vain, but inasmuch as he is coward as well as oppressor, you will find it no hard matter to win him over, if you have powerful friends at your back.

'The name of Earl Randle is not unknown in Venice,' replied Sir Richard, 'nor will my good master be slow to advance any ransom which this blood-sucker may require; but you, good father, how shall it fare with you?'

'Oh, bravely,' said the Italian. 'Who will think it worth his while to attack a barefooted friar? Truly this robe of serge, though somewhat costlier than that of my brother Francis, will excite little envy in the beholders, and thus prove to its wearer a coat of mail.'

A formal epistle to the Senator Sanuto was accordingly composed by the Grand Justiciary of Chester,

and by Fra Angelo done into fair and clerkly Italian. The Candian authorities forwarded it without delay to the Governor, who was then going his rounds among the Cycladean islands. Meanwhile the Greek vessel pursued her homeward way. When within sight of Patmos an autumnal gale sprang up, and caused some damage to her rigging, which, however, was speedily repaired : not so the fatal effect of the storm on Ivo's enfeebled frame ; he broke a blood-vessel, to the extreme terror of the superstitious sailors, and was by them hastily landed on the nearest point of that barren coast. His friends would not for a moment harbour the thought of abandoning him to the tender mercies of utter strangers, so they remained behind also, and watched and cared for him to the last. Ivo lingered but a few days, and never spoke intelligibly again ; but his every look and gesture betokened patience and peace, and Fra Angelo closed his eyes in the thankful conviction that all was well with his immortal part.

The pilgrims now waited only the Governor's permission to prosecute their journey. It was long ere any notice whatever was taken of their request ; at last an official clad in the rich livery of the Sanuto family, arrived at Patmos, and sought out the hut in which Sir Richard and his daughter had taken up their abode. He brought an invitation to them and to the Minorite also, to visit his master at his fortified residence on the isle of Samos. ' The reverend *Seignior*,' he said, ' would see them face to face, and

treat with them by word of mouth touching their transport to Damietta. For this purpose he, the Governor's under-bailiff, had been despatched to convey them at once to Samos; the voyage might be accomplished in a few hours.' The messenger proceeded darkly to hint that should our pilgrims decline his lord's proffered hospitality, they would be regarded and dealt with as spies by the inexorable Sanuto.

There was no choice but to accept this somewhat sinister invitation. The under-bailiff rather commanded than requested his master's guests to be in readiness to sail that night. They consented, Fra Angelo observing with a touch of humour that shipwrecked men needed little time for packing up; Sir Richard relieving his burdened mind by the smothered exclamation, 'Discourteous knave of a more discourteous master, this churlishness bodes no good for our reception yonder—alas! that my little ewe lamb should fall into such peril! but the wolf that would hurt thee, my Rosamond, must tear thine old father in pieces first!'

Short as was the interval between the arrival and departure of the Governor's felucca, it did indeed amply suffice for the pilgrim's requirements. Sir Richard carried, secured upon his person, a sufficient stock of bezants to supply their needs for the present; he had now changed one of these at the monastery for its equivalent in silver coins, and having paid the few debts which in that primitive age and place

it had been possible to contract, delivered over the residue to Rosamond. She, with nimble step, returned to the beach, and distributed 'largesse' amongst the island matrons and maidens who had ministered to and befriended her. They gathered around her, bewailing her departure with such outcries and gestures as astonished by their vehemence her calmer English mood. They beat on their breasts, wept aloud, and kissed repeatedly the hem of her garment. Suddenly, however, one of them caught sight of Sanuto's bailiff descending the winding path ; she gave the alarm, and as fieldfares rise to the wing and are gone, so the whole bevy vanished noiselessly into the huts or rocky caves, and Rosamond was left alone. An hour later she embarked with her companions on board the felucca. The moon shone brilliantly overhead, and saw herself mirrored in the gentle swelling of each polished wave. So soft was the touch of the autumnal night air, that Rosamond did not at once seek shelter under the awning with which one end of the vessel was fitted up. She sat near her father watching the measured sweep of the oars, and marvelling at the bright phosphoric light which danced in the wake of the felucca. The whole scene was ghostlike and unearthly ; the rowers worked on in silence, so did the helmsman ; Sanuto's officer stood grim and immovable over against his prisoners (for as such he evidently regarded them), his dark rigid figure *cutting* harshly against that effulgent sky. The

arms which he wore gleamed from under his long cloak, threateningly.

In spite of the uncertainties which clouded their future, Rosamond felt a thrill of joy as the shores of Patmos receded from view. The last few weeks of inaction had been hard to bear, for she had for the first time seen her father's energy and cheerfulness give way ; the aimless monotony in which day after day past, was a trial he had never been schooled to bear, and it fretted his temper as rust eats into iron ; his imagination (that faculty which practical men often pride themselves on suffering to lie dormant) had become unnaturally excited, and conjured up images of woe to his child, to Earl Randle, to the chivalry assembled at Damietta. His sleep had departed from him, food had become distasteful, and even the calm wisdom of Fra Angelo could not restore the balance of his mind.

One glance at Sir Richard's countenance showed his daughter that the cloud of dejection had rolled away ; 'Richard was himself again ;' he felt himself once more a pilgrim ; the devout aspirations suited to that character, and the more earthly longings which would mingle with them, had resumed their natural flow.

For her own part, the maiden pondered with thankfulness on the strange turn of fate which had thus rendered her the companion of her father's wanderings. 'Had winds and waves treated us less rudely,' she thought, 'he had been at

Damietta, and I severed from him long since ; now, the bliss is mine of tending and cheering him in these sharp pinches of adversity ; my dearest father, how is my debt of love to thee increased, since thou hast deigned to tell me that my Gawyne lives, that he has won honour against the Moslem, that he escaped unhurt from the stern Dominicans ! Oh, might some minister of grace lead the holy Francis his way ! and sure it shall be so ordered, not for the sake of my poor prayer, but for the effectual fervent prayer of that righteous man !’

Soothed by these thoughts, and by the gentle rocking of the waves, Rosamond drew the ample folds of her cloak around her, and leaned back, the better to gaze on that fearful yet awful scene. The bold outline of Patmos had disappeared ; only sky and water were to be seen, the latter reflecting back the former, but giving a deeper tinge to its blue, and a more tremulous brightness to its countless lamps. Shooting stars, gliding downward like liquid gold, almost wearied the gaze by their frequency, and by the vividness which that clear atmosphere imparted to them. The maiden watched them for a time, then insensibly, as flowers close at night, her blue eyes closed also, and she slept calmly till the chill air of daybreak woke her.

‘ See yonder pointed headland rising abruptly from *the sea-margin,*’ observed Sir Richard, as day began

to dawn. 'What name may it bear, brother, and which island appertaineth it to ?'

'I judge it to be Cape Colonna, the southernmost point of Samos,' replied Fra Angelo. 'If so, two hours will bring us to our landing-place ; I speak, however, doubtfully, and for more certainty will briefly inquire our whereabouts from the helmsman.'

He accordingly turned to address this functionary, but was sharply rebuked for so doing by the vigilant bailiff. 'Peace, stranger,' he said, roughly, 'his excellency suffers not any in his employ to be tampered with by suspected men.'

The Minorite answered nothing, and Sir Richard, though highly incensed at the fellow's truculent bearing, followed his example, and prudently kept silence. After a pause, he addressed the Pisan in English, speaking low and cautiously ; 'It is good,' he said, 'to hope the best, yet prepare for the worst ; therefore, mine honoured friend, take we counsel together how to shape our course should matters go ill with us ; should this Venetian prove traitor against the laws of hospitality, as belike may happen, what argument, promise, or threat, think you might avail most with him ? You know the Venetian temper, and can advise me.'

'No promise save of large ransom, no argument unless weighted with gold,' replied Fra Angelo, 'may avail with a Venetian. Yet,' he added, crossing himself, 'I perchance speak uncharitably, misled by

private passion, and by the hereditary hatred that subsists betwixt our Pisa and that republic.'

'Not so, not so,' broke in the knight, 'all Europe knows that city's usuries, and knows them feelingly. But to the matter in hand. To tarry all winter in this Sanuto's power, awaiting a ransom which will scarce satisfy his craving, were alike irksome and unwise; there seems little hope that truth or kindness will so work in his breast as to procure us free release; threats are of no avail, for what so contemptible as empty menace? what so easy to this bad man, if provoked, as to rid himself of us after the secret fashion of Venice?

'If hard pressed, escape were not impossible,' suggested the Minorite, 'at least, from this isle of Samos, a narrow channel only, dividing it from the main land of Asia; but the Saints forbid,' he added, earnestly, 'that you should be driven to such extremity!'

'Thou ever forgettest to think of thine own safety, brother,' abruptly resumed Sir Richard, after a troubled silence. 'What plan hast thou bethought thee of for thine escape? for if I comprehend thee aright, the love of the Venetian towards the Pisan is,

'As that of the Jew towards his Samaritan neighbour,' said Fra Angelo, smiling. 'Yes, I know it, and will omit no precaution that may consist with the strict rule of our order; "if ye be brought before magistrates, take no thought, neither premeditate."

Meanwhile, kind Englishman, be warned by me, and do not link your fate with mine in the coming interview with this man ; make the best terms that honour permits for yourself and your daughter ; if that hope fail, flee with her to the opposite shore, take refuge in Smyrna, and claim the protection of the Emperor of Nice, whose that town now is.'

'Tut, tut,' answered the Englishman, 'you shall not shake us off thus unmannerly, brother. How, without your pilotage, could we find the gate of Paradise, should it be this Sanuto's pleasure to send us there ? or how could we deal with people whose tongue and whose customs are alike strange to us ?'

Fra Angelo only responded to the kindly though bluff appeal, by a grave inclination of the head. 'From Smyrna,' he proceeded, pursuing the thread of his discourse, 'twere no hard matter to find your way to Constantinople, and if it pleased you to bestow your noble daughter in safety there, many Latin convents would gladly open their doors to receive her.'

'My child,' replied Sir Richard, 'is under stringent vow to set foot in Palestine ; I know her to be bent on this emprise, and dare swear she, like myself, would rather push forward to the Blessed Land than crawl back, crab-fashion, to corrupt and treacherous Constantinople. Tell me, kind Angelo, were we three at Smyrna, and free, how could we best push on from thence to Damietta ?

‘A password from the lord of Nice,’ replied Angelo, “will open the way through Phrygia to pilgrims ; further south, the fierce Moslems of Iconium beset the path, yet even there you may travel safely under the shadow of Alexios Komnenos to the port of Attalia ; from Attalia ’tis a short voyage to Acre, and ships begin to fare betwixt those ports by Mid-lent ; once at Acre, Damietta is gained.’

There was a strange tremor in Angelo’s voice as he named the Komnenos ; perhaps it struck Sir Richard, for he asked, ‘Is the Alexios, of whom you speak, him whom men call the faithful emperor ? If so, the report of his valour has reached our distant isle, I scarce know how.’

‘As the lightning flashes from east to west, so do hero deeds,’ replied Angelo, briefly.

The chill touch of dawn had roused Rosamond from a refreshing sleep ; she had risen up, first to tell her beads silently in the twilight, then to watch the ‘hues of the bright unfolding morn,’ drawing from them fresh auguries of hope. By degrees, her attention had been arrested by the conversation between her father and the Minorite, and she had listened with thrilling interest, and with the warmest participation in Sir Richard’s resolve to press forwards to the Holy Land and Damietta. She would have expressed this feeling had she been alone with him, but awe of his companion kept her silent. At the mention of the Komnenos, however, she could

refrain no longer, and exclaimed, ‘Remember you not, my father, the Greek minstrel, who visited last year our court in Brittany, and sang in most entrancing strain of his faithful Emperor, Alexios of Trebizonde?’

‘In sooth, child, no,’ answered Sir Richard, ‘my head is too old and grey to be stuffed with poesy and romaunt as thine is; besides, hath not her grace the Lady Clémence some new minstrel or juggler for each day in the year?’

‘Oh, but this Greek surpassed them all,’ persisted the maiden; ‘you yourself confessed as much at the time, and willingly fetched the purse of gold, wherewith my lady rewarded his skill.’

‘Ay, I remember now,’ said the knight; ‘’twas, in sooth, a stirring strain, and told how the warrior single-handed beat back the Mussulmen of Iconium, scorning alliance with those unbelievers.’

‘The romaunt was not all warlike,’ continued Rosamond, musingly, ‘it recited also the griefs and patience of that illustrious prince and of fair Irene his wife, and how God visited them sorely and made their hearth desolate—oh, ’twas a story to wring tears from stones!’

A sound as of a groan suppressed, arrested Rosamond’s speech; she looked up and beheld Fra Angelo struggling with strong agitation, his pale forehead knitted into sudden furrows and lines quite at variance with its usual passionless and serene smoothness; she saw evidently that some word of

hers had given him acute pain, for he turned hastily away. She looked wonderingly at Sir Richard, but his penetration could not solve the mystery, and he could only conjecture that Angelo's past history might have been bound up in some way with that of the Komnenos. He dreamed not of intermeddling with the grief of a comparative stranger, but in his heart liked the man the better for this proof that he possessed human feelings and sympathies. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,' and till that 'touch' has been made evident to us, we may esteem, venerate, admire, but cannot love or trust.

CHAPTER IX.

“’Tis Greece, but living Greece no more!”

Byron.

THE eyes of our pilgrims now rested almost unconsciously on one of the most beautiful views that earth has to show. There was the wooded and indented coast of Asia Minor, far to the east, standing out against a sky of faint rose-colour. A crisp morning breeze ran over the surface of the waves, which yielded to it as harp-strings to the touch of the minstrel. Cape Colonna, with its wooded base and crest of marble, rose on their left, its topmost peaks shimmering white against their background of grey cloud. Before them lay a deep bay, and close to its beach the ruins of a temple, dedicated of yore to Juno. The ground rose abruptly behind this ruin, in some parts bare and of a rusty red, in others clothed with dwarf oak. Only one object marred in some degree the beauty of the scene, and that was a long line of modern stone buildings, following the sweep of the bay on their right hand. These Rosamond recognised as warehouses, resembling, though on a smaller scale, those she had seen on the out-

skirts of princely Venice ; a rude barrack for the soldiers who guarded them was erected close at hand.

The vessel had now entered the harbour, and its keel grated on the pebbly beach. A bugle-call from the bailiff was responded to by Sanuto's coast-guard, and the party was speedily landed, and led to the guard-house. Here, in a low room, built principally from the ruins of Juno's once famous temple, they sat down, and gladly warmed themselves at a fire of coals. Refreshment was set before them, and Sir Richard insisted on his daughter's partaking of a cup of light Samian wine, in addition to the flat cakes of Indian wheat set before them. No sooner had the sun risen gloriously over the island, than a *carroccio*, or heavy litter, drawn by four oxen, appeared in readiness to convey them to their destination. The three strangers entered it, and their janitor followed and took his seat next the door, with his hand on his dagger, and his eye fixed on Sir Richard. At a signal from him, a thick awning was thrown over the vehicle, and fastened down curtain-wise so as to shut out the view entirely. The knight's courteous request that it might be drawn back sufficiently to admit the morning breeze was briefly refused, and so they travelled on in gloomy silence, over rough and broken ground.

It was a severe mortification to Sir Richard to be thus prevented from examining the features of the country through which they passed. The more he

heard of Sanuto, and saw of his representative, the more did he feel that he must trust for Rosamond's and his preservation rather to his own courage and skill, than to the Venetian's generosity. It might have facilitated their chance of escape had he been able to note the form of the island, of which, be it remembered, he was wholly ignorant, maps and charts being things at that time unknown. That resource failing, he could but note that their vehicle soon entered on low swampy ground, through which the kine dragged them heavily. Presently, the track began to ascend, and the notes of the frog and the water-bird were exchanged for those of the wood-pigeon and wheat-ear. At last the carroccio rumbled over a draw-bridge, stopped at the challenge of a warder, then resumed its march, a gate closing and clashing behind them. A few yards more over stone pavement brought them to their journey's end ; the bailiff alighted, and would have assisted Rosamond to do so, but she sprang lightly past him. Her fellow-travellers followed more deliberately, and they perceived themselves to be in a quadrangle, surrounded with sombre stone buildings, and paved with the coarse marble of the island. Before them was a flight of steps, with highly ornamented balustrades, surmounted on each side by a colossal lion. The hall-doors of oak, plated with iron, had been thrown open, and Sanuto, or as he chose to be called, the Doge of the Cyclades, stood within with a train of servants at his back.

If Rosamond's imagination had, as is probable, pictured to her this tyrant, a man of thew and sinew, strong in frame as he was in power to oppress, she was doomed to disappointment. Sanuto was of smaller proportions than even Earl Randle, and so fair-haired that it was not easy to distinguish the admixture of grey which advancing age had tinged his locks withal ; his robe of Alexandrian velvet fell loosely round him, concealing a suit of armour ; he wore full sleeves fastened at the wrist, and his fingers and thumbs were loaded with costly and brilliant rings. His apparel and breath were redolent of mastic, the perfume most used by Moslems, and therefore generally despised by Christians. A Senator's bonnet, smaller than those with which Titian has made us familiar, sat on his head, nor did he remove it as he advanced to greet his involuntary guests. This he did with a mixture of embarrassment and insolence which were far from prepossessing. Sir Richard Fytton was wholly ignorant of the Greek language, and almost equally so of the Italian ; he, therefore, could only reply by a grave, cold bow ; his daughter had indeed picked up enough of the Venetian dialect to act as interpreter, but she shrank from any communication with this bad man ; and her repugnance was not lessened when the Senator advanced towards her, and familiarly offering his jewelled right hand, would have conducted her into his great hall. She coldly drew back to her father's side, and so they entered the mansion in silence, a

scornful glance being the only notice Sanuto vouchsafed to take of Fra Angelo.

Our English pilgrims, used at home to bare walls and rush-strewn floors, could not but be struck by the magnificence of the Doge reception-room. He marked their surprise, and turning to one of his numerous attendants, said in the tone of an autocrat, 'Fetch Messer Marino my son ; bid him come hither—*presto, presto* ; say the Doge will not be kept waiting.'

The menial flew to execute his lord's bidding, and in the twinkling of an eye returned and resumed his place and statue-like attitude in the long row of richly attired domestics. Messer Marino presently entered the hall, but in a very deliberate and nonchalant manner ; he was a young man, apparently under two-and-twenty, his unusual height somewhat diminished by the roundness of his shoulders and his slouching gait ; his face was red and his eye bloodshot, probably from the effects of frequent intemperance ; his countenance was vacant, but assumed an air of dogged self-will when addressed by his father thus : 'Ah, scapegrace ! did I not bid thee be in attendance when my guests should arrive ? Where hast thou been ? Ah, as usual, wasting my substance in gambling ? *Aleppè !* we will find means to tame thee by-and-by. Now approach—and since this proud English maiden disdains the courtesy of an old man, let us see whether the homage of a young one will be more acceptable.'

Rosamond's cheeks burnt at the conclusion of this harangue, every word of which she perfectly comprehended. Messer Marino growled forth a Venetian oath, but durst not disobey; he drew near, and vailed his bonnet to the strangers, fixing a broad stare on Rosamond after the unchivalrous fashion of the youths of his republic. That one glance sufficed, however, and he withdrew his eyes with an air of dismay and embarrassment, muttering, '*Pappè Satan!* I never thought of this!'

The maiden's ingenuous features were flushed with surprise, and that of no agreeable kind. 'This gentleman and I have met before,' she said to her father. 'Twas he I told you of whose gondola, manned by himself and other drunken revellers, ran down our bark in a narrow canal at Venice. But for prompt succour rendered by an officer of the Doge, the Lady Clemence had sunk. That prince hearing of her grace's jeopardy, sent for this gentleman, and rebuked him sharply.'

Sir Richard did not reply, but drew his child closer to him, inwardly resolving to endure any risk rather than be parted from her in Samos even for a day. The Senator meanwhile was perplexing himself to account for his son's bewildered air, and came to the not altogether mistaken conclusion that 'Marinaccio' had begun the day with stronger potations than usual of the heady Samian vintage. He therefore addressed him in wrathful accents. 'To thy chamber, Sirrah! there remain till thou hast

slept away the fumes of this new wine ! Gandolfo, see him thither, and draw the bolt upon him.'

The culprit had vanished before the conclusion of this speech. Sanuto, apparently nothing aware of the unseemliness of such domestic broils, turned to his guests, and beckoned them to follow him through a long range of apartments. Here were heaped, rather than set out, such treasures as the court of Randle of Chester, or even of Henry of England, could not display. There were tables made of various exquisite marbles, of sea-blue tint, of leaf-green hue ; candelabras of bronze ; clocks of Oriental fashioning ; and statues mostly of the base and corrupt taste of the Lower Empire. All these, and many rich gems besides, which were shut up from the covetous gaze in caskets, were spoils taken by the rapacious Sanuto at the sack of Constantinople. He advanced slowly through them, pointing with the hand to one or another, lest their magnificence should be lost on the strangers. Once he diverged, and opened a door to the right, revealing to view a gorgeous little chapel, or rather oratory. The altar was decked with velvet, and blazing with gems, and a crystal casket placed upon it was bright with those 'matchless carbuncles which,' says a chronicler, 'blazoned with intrinsic light, and scattered darkness by their own beams.' Herein lay enshrined a hand of St. Gregory, viewed by the devout of that age as a treasure beyond price, and endowed with healing gifts. To men like

its present owner, it appeared merely a marketable commodity, whereby lands and lordships might be cheaply acquired.

Sanuto surveyed the reliquary which held this treasure with a shrewd twinkle of the eye, and addressing Angelo for the first time, said, 'Boniface of Montserrat would give half Candia for this—and now, friar, what sayest thou? Are the gems which overlay it rare?'

'They are of earth's rarest,' replied Fra Angelo, sternly and sadly; he seemed about to say more but checked himself, observing that the Venetian was on the watch to entrap him. Sanuto now drew near the shrine with quick irreverent step. 'Is Peppo our Sacristan at hand?' he inquired from one of his retinue, and being answered in the negative, he took a key from his own girdle, unlocked the casket, and drew forth the bony relic on its silver tray. The blackened fingers were decked with jewels, which Sanuto held up, turning first one then another towards the light, the better to display their sparkle. 'He might be a trader bragging of his wares on the quays of Venice!' thought the indignant Rosamond, as she saw the relic thus unworthily handled. Perhaps the feelings of disgust which his profaneness inspired were legible in her countenance, for Sanuto changed his tone, and composed his face to a look of demure sanctity. 'Thy speech, Friar,' he said, 'proclaims thee a Pisan, and thy habit a Franciscan. Say, have Pisa or Assisi *aught* holier to show than this most precious relic?'

‘The holier it, the more unfit thou to hold it,’ replied Fra Angelo, fixing his severe and searching gaze on the Senator; he spoke in a very low but distinct tone, and at the same time took the silver tray from Sanuto’s unresisting grasp, and reverently replaced it.

Sanuto glared upon him for a few moments, paralyzed by surprise and rage, then stammered forth : ‘What means this? And who art thou, needy insolent beggar, who dost beard me in mine own palace?’

‘I am the Lord’s unworthy servant and messenger to thee, O Doge,’ replied Angelo; ‘thou thyself dost force me to speak, and the rule of mine Order does no longer permit me to hold back. I am one who stood in the desecrated cathedral of Constantinople sixteen years ago, and shed burning tears over the iniquities perpetrated by thee and thy fellows. I saw your sumpter mules led to the very altar steps, and there laden with booty—your drunken men-at-arms carousing with the sacred vessels—women, or fiends in woman’s shape, enthroned by you on the patriarchal chair, and uttering blasphemies unfit so much as to be named! This, and much more I saw! and thou, far from repenting, hast hardened thine heart, building palaces with oppression, and factories with blood. And thinkest thou, O Duke, that the possession of this relic shall avail for the remission of thy crimes? Nay, verily; rather shall he, of whose righteous and merciful deeds it was the instrument, rise up to con-

demn thee in that Day when the saints shall judge the world !'

Sanuto absolutely trembled as these words were uttered. For sixteen years he had reigned supreme in the Cycladean islands, surrounded by creatures of his own ; he had carefully excluded from his presence all clerical persons of greater authority than Peppo the sacristan, or the corrupt Latin priests whose ministrations he had forced on his new Greek subjects ; the words of truth had therefore never 'pierced the fearful hollow of his ear' since the sack of Constantinople, and now they flashed in, producing scarcely any other sensation than that of blind terror. This passion worked so visibly on his pale and convulsed countenance, that the by-standers held their breath, watching silently the issue of the internal struggle.

'I am not well ; Gandolfo, hold me up,' he gasped at length, beckoning with unsteady hand to his confidential servant, who now appeared in the door-way. The man obeyed, observing, *sotto voce*, with an unconcerned air, 'that the Seignior was subject to these distempers, and if crossed, would often stare, and catch the air, and foam at the mouth ; that after a while he would come to himself, forgetting the cause which had moved him to anger !' This symptom of forgetfulness, however, did not manifest itself on the present occasion. No sooner had Sanuto recovered consciousness, and staggered to his feet, than he shook off Angelo's supporting arm, with a look of mingled

malignity and fear. With Gandolfo's help he slowly left the chapel, first, however, calling to him his under-bailiff, the same person who had escorted our pilgrims from Patmos.

'Lead the strangers to the vaulted chambers,' he said ; 'place a guard of halberdiers at the Englishman's door ; answer no questions they may ask ; say only that in two hours the Doge bids them meet him in his banquetting-hall ; for yonder Pisan,' and he ground his teeth as he spoke, 'see him thyself bestowed in the felon's prison, bind him fast, and let him fare as my galley-slaves do. Nay, not a word,' he added, seeing the man hesitate ; 'and mark me, thy head for his if he escape.' The bailiff still demurred, for there was a spark of good left in him which sixteen years of reckless living had not trampled out ; 'your Excellency,' he began, braving the rising passion that made Sanuto's frame quiver, 'yonder is a holy man ; bethink you, should he be under the safe keeping of Saint Nicholas, and should that blessed bishop be minded to avenge his servant, what evil might not befall your argosies, now afloat ? or your granaries, now building ? or the harbour, which your galley-slaves are forced to work at day and night lest the first winter storm wash it away ? Bethink you, Seignior, Saint Nicholas is strong !'

The Senator paused, superstition waging fierce conflict in his breast, with hatred, national and personal, of the Pisan. He was but a faint-hearted

villain after all, and a high wind, or a' rumour of pirates, or a failure in the crops, had power to make him wretched ; he trusted none of his servants, still less his son ; he feared the saints, whose shrines he was conscious of having desecrated, yet grudged the sums of money by which their favour might, he believed, have been bought back. This timidity made him a restless miserable man, and by working upon it, the bailiff, who knew him well, thought to save him from incurring afresh the stain of blood-guiltiness ; but Gandolfo, who had other designs, and possessed a larger share of influence, now interposed.

‘Tito, thou pratest like a monk,’ he said impatiently to his fellow-servant, ‘forgetting that should the Doge’s excellency submit tamely to this Pisan’s insolence, he shall forthwith be flouted by every servant in his house. Let those, Seignior,’ he continued, addressing the Senator, ‘who witnessed the affront, witness its prompt chastisement also ; and beshrew my heart if blessed Nicholas, ay, and Gregory, too, think not the better of you for maintaining your kingly state !’

‘Kingly ?’ repeated Sanuto, to whom the word was delicious music, ‘kingly, saidst thou ? Softly, good fellow, we have not reached the topmost round of the golden ladder yet. But now for yonder shaveling ; ’twere in truth politic, as thou sayest, to make his chastisement public as the offence ; send *him*, therefore, safely bound to my galleys, bid my

slave-master chain him to the worst caitiff there, and spare neither work nor blows."

'It shall be done, your highness,' replied Gandolfo, casting a triumphant glance towards his discomfited rival. 'And now, will it please your grace repose awhile, for you look pale?'

'Ay, ay, I feel drowsy,' said the Doge, leaning heavily on his servant's arm; 'lead on, Gandolfo; bid the Sciote maid, Euphrosyne, leave her loom awhile and bring her lute to soothe me; then do thou see to the performance of my various biddings, not forgetting to call Messer Marino to the banquet, if he be sober.'

Meanwhile the crest-fallen bailiff set himself to fulfil his lord's injunctions, and with less of discourtesy than he had previously exhibited, delivered the Doge's message to the English strangers. 'Pray you, gentles, follow me to the chambers assigned to you by my lord; this way, madonna!'

They saw no choice but to obey; Rosamond cast a lingering look towards the noble-hearted Minorite; Sir Richard wrung his hand, saying, 'My arm is powerless to fight for thee in this den of thieves; yet, brother, it irks me sore that we must part! God shield thee His true confessor, and give us speedy meeting.'

'Amen!' replied Angelo, returning the pressure with quiet earnestness; 'the Lord be with you.'

Never in his Umbrian cell, nor when kneeling in rapt devotion by Francesco's side, had he tasted a

peace more profound than now. It had been granted to him to 'witness a good confession' before Sanuto, and this high privilege, for such he accounted it, was to him sufficient earnest of grace and peace and blessings in store, and of forgiveness for the errors of his youth and riper age. On his own account, therefore, he felt neither misgiving nor sadness, and the keen inquietude with which he could not but regard Sir Richard's dangerous predicament, and that of his helpless child, lost its sharp edge when laid before God in prayer.

The Cheshire knight may be pardoned if the same firm trust did not exist in his mind. As he followed the bailiff along one arched and low-browed passage after another, he looked uneasily for any facilities to escape that might exist, but none offered themselves. It was evident that this part of the building had once been monastic, for they passed cell after cell, seemingly uninhabited. At last the bailiff stopped before a low door, opened it, and signed to Sir Richard that the apartment within was destined for him. It presented a complete contrast to the gorgeous chambers which they had just quitted, being dark, low, and almost unfurnished; little, however, did the knight care for this, except as one proof amongst many others of inhospitality and evil intentions; the safety of Rosamond was the one consideration which weighed with him.

'How is my daughter lodged, and where?' he *inquired*, in French. The bailiff understood his

gestures rather than his words, and pointed to a door opposite his ; he then signed to four halberdiers, who, with measured tread and clank of arms, were approaching from the opposite end of the gallery, and consigned Sir Richard to their keeping. They rather pushed than led him into his cell, and one of them drew a strong bolt upon him. The four then sat down on a stone bench, and drawing some copper coins from their pouches, challenged one another to a game not unlike our chuck-farthing.

Rosamond stood like one petrified, as she witnessed this uncereemonious usage of her father. A touch from the bailiff recalled her to herself, and she silently followed him into the cell assigned to her, then sank down on a seat, struggling with her tears. Her janitor moved away towards the narrow unglazed slit in a wall twelve feet thick, that passed for a window. There he stood a few moments, embarrassed and somewhat moved by her distress ; then, returning to her side, he growled forth, ‘Wipe your tears, madonna ! as we used to say at Venice, “tears will not float a boat that is aground !” Your father is safe enough unless he gamble his life away by rash hardihood.’

Somewhat comforted by this rough address, Rosamond looked up and smiled.

‘I will send my girl Tita to you by and bye,’ he said, ‘and she shall see for some woman’s gear to brighten this dull hole. Faith ! ’tis no wonder the

Dogaressa died mad, as men report, after six years spent in these vaulted chambers !

‘The Dogaressa died here, say you, and mad?’ asked Rosamond, shuddering.

‘Ay, ay, but that is an old story!’ replied the bailiff; ‘our Marinaccio was but a stripling then; see here, this little door leads to the garden where she was wont to take her pastime.’ As he spoke he approached the door in question, and affected to examine its fastenings. ‘Faith! the wooden staple is rotten!’ he exclaimed; ‘I should not wonder if a very slight push sufficed to set it ajar!’ He looked towards his captive with a cunning wink, whose meaning she was not slow to comprehend; she sprang up, a bright hope of regaining freedom flashing through her brain, but it was quenched as soon as kindled. ‘Head of Bacchus,’ continued the bailiff, with a smothered laugh, ‘couldst thou dream, maiden, that it was a chance of escape that I set before thee? Nay, nay, I am not so mad; but to a prisoner, an enclosure twenty paces long, and twelve wide, open to the free air of heaven, is better than the four walls of his cell. Content thyself with this indulgence.’ So saying, he departed, and Rosamond, whose tears pride had restrained, sat down on her low pallet, and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER X.

“Richard Fytton, justiciary of Chester, in the reign of Henry III., granted Fulshawe to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.”—*History of Cheshire*. (ORMEROD.)

“There is no creature loves me, and if I die, no soul shall pity me.”—*Shakespeare*.

TEARS possess a marvellous power of lightening the heart and clearing the perplexed brain. So Rosamond found, after her first paroxysm of grief had passed away. The shock of being rudely parted from her father, and of seeing him absolutely at the mercy of a crafty, unprincipled man, had wrought her up to an unusual pitch of sorrow. If any deem her weak-hearted, let them remember that a heavy burden was at this time laid upon her, and that she was left to struggle with it alone ; that weariness of body, and the vigils and fastings which of necessity attend on a wandering life, had impaired her strength, and lastly, that at the bottom of all her griefs lay the ever-present, never-spoken thought of Gawyne, poisoning alike the well-springs of memory and hope. Rosamond inherited no small portion of the noble Fytton temper—steadfast, truthful, serene, willing rather to die than to *complain* ; but no mere noble-

ness of disposition, innate or hereditary, can bear up its possessor through the sharp pinches of long-protracted adversity ; and but for the remembrance of her pilgrim vows, and the sense of heavenly protection which that remembrance brought with it, she might 'utterly have fainted' now. Reflection, however, brought back hope, and hope energy, and soon the torrent of tears subsided into a gracious rain, freshening the weary heart. She raised her head, and looked round the narrow cell with reviving interest. It bore some traces of its former distinguished and most unhappy occupant, for the floor was of tessellated marbles, and curtains of tarnished velvet, now looped back, divided it from an alcove which had evidently once been an oratory. Here nothing of the furniture remained except a prayer-desk of carved stone, a tattered missal, and broken candlesticks of alabaster. A chain was fastened into the wall, and lay in coils on the floor, suggesting the horrible conjecture that perhaps Sanuto's wife had at times needed its restraint.

Willing to shake off this mournful train of ideas, Rosamond rose to explore her chamber ; the few articles of furniture which garnished it were beggarly enough, but she saw with pleasure amongst them an oaken coffer of her own, containing change of raiment and other needful gear, procured by her at Patmos. Since for her father's sake it was expedient that she should attend Sanuto's banquet, she would thus have the means of appearing there in less forlorn

and travel-stained guise. To her disappointment, the slit through which daylight found its way into her cell, looked out on a dead wall ; the atmosphere was, therefore, close and stifling ; a colony of bats hung in motionless clusters from the vault overhead, undisturbed unless by the huge spiders which divided with them their insect prey. She examined the missal, but it was so injured by damp as to be scarcely legible ; and its fair emblazonings had been cut out, probably for the sake of the gold and costly ultramarine blue that enriched them.

‘Every object in this place breathes of sadness,’ sighed the maiden. ‘Yet do I fear to avail myself of the permission to roam beyond it. What if some trap were laid for me without there ! Yet why entertain such dark distrust ? That man, though rough as winter’s blast, looked on me not unkindly, nor has he the cruel and crafty eye of his master. Moreover, it behoves me to note narrowly, as I see my father do, every chink and outlet in this gloomy place ; who knows but such wary handling may avail some little toward our deliverance and that of the holy friar ?’

The idea restored elasticity to her step, and she forthwith applied her strength to open the little door, which, with reluctant creaking, yielded to her touch ; she passed through, and found herself in a second chamber, which had once been the ‘lavatorium’ attached to that cloister, and was still surrounded with stone baths. The industrious

monks had diverted a small stream from its channel, in order to obtain a supply of water copious and pure. This still flowed freely, and spouted forth from the marble jaws of a lion's head which projected from the wall. Its gentle splash enlivened the gloom of that solitary recess.

Encouraged by her success so far, the maiden ventured through a low stone arch-way, and entered a sunless enclosure planted with herbs and shrubs. It was walled in on all sides. A noble vine covered the opposite and highest wall, which was at least twelve feet high, and crowned with iron spikes. A few shrivelled bunches of the exquisite white muscadine grape still hung upon it, half hidden by their delicate leaf. The grass under foot grew thick and rank, concealing an artificial runnel of water, which had been contrived for the benefit of the surrounding shrubs. Wild cucumbers grew among the orange stems ; almond-trees were wreathed round and half-choked by garlands of white bindweed ; and the narrow-leaved 'votomos,' or wild-lentisc, drooped its feathery branches and clusters of golden berries to the ground.

The spot was gloomy and neglected, yet Rosamond felt a sensation of pleasure as she gazed upon it. There was something in the rank luxuriance of the herbage and bushes grateful to an eye which for many weeks had gazed on little else than cliff, rock, and sky, and their sunless position, shaded and cooped in by those inexorable walls, bore a soothing

resemblance to her own captive lot. She permitted herself, therefore, to linger amongst them awhile, and to enjoy their fair forms and sweet scents, so new to an English eye and ear. It would be time enough by-and-bye to apparel herself for the Doge's hateful feast.

Her tranquillity, however, was not of long continuance. It wanted two hours of noon, and Sanuto's household, which had assembled in the common-hall to despatch the one substantial meal of the day, now dispersed in all directions through the palace. Many of them, emboldened by the absence of their lord (who, they knew, never recovered from an attack of epilepsy until he had tasted an hour's sound sleep), rushed into a court-yard adjoining the cloister, in order to recreate themselves with games of chance. Gambling was at this time a passion among the Venetians, as Rosamond had discovered during her residence in their capital.

And now the rising sounds in Sanuto's court-yard reminded her of that plague spot of Venice ; she felt sure that the plebeian game of 'Zara' was going on, and the quick tinkle of dice, and the shouts of the lookers-on, proved that the players were eager and excited. Adieu to quiet contemplation, as any one may know who has ever been condemned to listen to the voice of an Italian rabble, and to hear their exquisitely musical language turned into harsh and vulgar din !

The game had not continued many minutes before a quarrel arose, and Rosamond heard loud voices charging one of the parties engaged in it with unfair play! The uproar waxed loud, and it was evident that the offender had been expelled with ignominy from the ring, and ordered by the umpires of the game to pay a fine. He resisted the demand, and a noisy chace began in the direction of Rosamond's cloister. This, as we have said, was divided from the court-yard by a wall of moderate height, overshadowed on the further side by a thicket of lentisc, bay, and other high bushes. A crashing amongst those bushes indicated that the offender had taken refuge there, and his persecutors stopped short in their pursuit with mingled groans, hootings, and laughter. A voice recalled them to the arena of contest, and the game was presently resumed with as much spirit as before the interruption.

This disturbance over, Rosamond's thoughts reverted to her own position, and she fell into deep reflection as to the best means of escape from the power of Sanuto. That he, however sordid and unscrupulous, would, unless provoked, make any attempt on her father's life or hers she did not believe; but it had become evident that they could not hope for freedom until they had paid down a heavy ransom. How could this by any possibility be obtained, without long and harassing delay? Were they to remain during the whole winter at Sanuto's mercy? And *would her father tamely bear such thralldom, and the*

bitter mortification of being so long absent from his post? Should he, on the other hand, lose patience, and express to Sanuto a tithe of the scorn which his meanness inspired, how fatal might not the result be! She shuddered to think that her father and she were wholly in this man's power, and doubtless deemed long since dead by their fellow-pilgrims on board the fleet; whatever violence or treachery might be practised upon them, therefore, none would make inquiry, none would either avenge or save!

It was a maze of perplexing thoughts, which seemed to set the hope of deliverance further off than before; Rosamond broke it off, with a renewed resolution, of acting and speaking with extreme caution, and of noting every fresh place, person, or circumstance. Eager to begin this her new system of vigilance, she glanced upwards to measure the height and thickness of the walls. In so doing, she found herself face to face with no less a person than Messer Marino!

It must be confessed that the heir of the Dogedom of the Cyclades had seldom appeared in a less dignified point of view than at this moment! His features usually flushed by intemperance, were still more inflamed by the haste and discomfiture with which he had fled from his incensed boon-companions. Breathless with the exertion of scaling the side-wall of the cloister, he paused at the top of it, panting, and muttering to himself, 'The caitiffs! to dare rate me, their lord's son, with dishonesty! as if

it were not honour enough for such low churls to play with me on any terms ! I do think their observance towards me waxes smaller day by day ; and no marvel, since my father now flouts me openly, and keeps no measure !’

A vision of the pale English maiden pacing slowly up and down the cloister-garden now caught Marino’s eye. It brought with it a start of superstitious terror, for Marino, however profane, was not above the popular belief in ghosts and goblins ; a tradition that his mother, the unhappy Dogaressa, still haunted the scene of her last earthly sorrows, had been whispered in his hearing years ago, and now recurred to his besotted mind. He therefore stared with suspended breath and bristling hair at the apparition, and actually ‘swore a prayer or two’ to St. Mark, before the comfortable truth that Rosamond was flesh and blood dawned upon him. ‘And, by my father’s bonnet,’ he then proceeded to soliloquise, ‘the very person I most desire to see ; for if I stop not her mouth touching our ill-starred meeting at Venice, it shall go ill with me !’

These reflections nerved his long and ungainly limbs for a hasty leap from the wall, and he at once approached the maiden with an air of familiarity. She drew back, and asked coldly, ‘What do you here, Seignior Don Marino ?’

‘What do *you* here, most wrathful dove ?’ he retorted. ‘I would have you to know that you have *over-past* the bounds of your cage ; if my father, the

potent and reverend Doge, should find you in this place, you or the jailor whom you have cozened out of this much freedom, will smart for it !'

'What uncouthness is this ?' replied Rosamond with spirit. 'Truly had we fallen into the hands of Saracens, we had met with better usage ; if you, young gentleman, have any spark of grace left within you, think what foul shame it is to use Christian pilgrims thus, and make amend straightway for your father's churlishness.'

'She queens it over me, captive though she is,' soliloquised Marino. 'How is it that I seem compelled to do her bidding ? Is it by virtue of the staff and scallop-shell she bears ? Or does a ghostly awe and dread hang over this cloister still, and make a frightened child of me ? I'll shake it off, and bend her to my will.'

He advanced some paces nearer to Rosamond, and was about to take her hand familiarly, but she shook him off. Woman's instinct, rendered more true and keen by the defencelessness of her position, taught her at once how best to deal with this weak and profligate youth. 'I see,' she said, 'that the meanest serf in my native isle boasts of more courtesy than a Doge's son here ; I might have guessed as much, remembering Venice.'

'Ay, marry, that was a sorry passage in my life,' stammered Marino, overawed by her calm fearlessness. 'I was then red-hot with drinking, for which accomplishment I have somewhat poor and unhappy

brains.' He paused, after uttering this lame apology with so odd a mixture of confusion and effrontery, that Rosamond could scarcely repress a smile.

'We also,' she said, 'find amongst our Northern gallants men who think to warm their sluggish blood with drinking; but they are no true knights which do so.'

'Look you, Madonna,' resumed Marino, encouraged by the relenting expression in her eye, 'had my father given me the training of a prince, it might have happened otherwise; but my spring of life was passed amid base fellows, learned in nought but dice and sottishness. The old man is of savage-jealous temper, and cannot bear to look on one who shall succeed to his gold; my elder brother, a man as much surpassing me as fine flour does bran, he has already disinherited; thinking, perhaps, to get rid of me also, he sent me, ill-attended and worse-moneyed, to the camp of Damietta last Easter! but I overmatched him in craft: I would not go, not I, where shafts were flying, and pestilent airs breathing death, and nothing to be got but fame! I betook myself instead to Venice, and there applied myself to mending my fortunes with the dice, and many a gold ducat, thanks to blessed St. Mark, I won in the old city.'

'And your father, how did you appease him?' inquired the maiden, her curiosity for the moment getting the better of her disgust at this tissue of *falsehood and meanness*.

‘My father! beshrew your heart, damsel, my father knows nothing of the matter! neither shall he know, for I have turned aside a messenger from Doge Ziani, who was on his road here laden with ugly reports of me. Oh! I have laughed over this stratagem of mine until the tears ran o’er!’

Rosamond’s blue eyes opened wide at such a revelation; she was one of those blessed ones who have learned piety towards God by the sweet and natural training of filial love, in whose eyes ‘such divinity doth hedge’ a parent, that one derogatory thought of him were treason! Marino’s words were to her a sort of loathsome riddle, and she knew not whether most to wonder, pity, or condemn.

‘Are you Christians, that you use one another thus?’ she said at length, slowly and looking down, as though to avoid the sight of his shame; but Marino replied with unconcern, ‘We are Christians, though but of a mongrel sort, for we pay a poll-tax year by year to the Pope to absolve us for the sack of Constantinople; to make up for this, we lend our soldiers to the Soldan of Iconium, whose heavy money-bags, in payment of this loan, are even now expected in Samos harbour; if my father share them not with me, it shall be worse for him!’

Rosamond would have cut the dialogue short ere this, had she not feared turning this unprincipled ‘Marinaccio’ into an active enemy; she now thought it time to withdraw to her cell, and turned her steps that way, resolving to bar the inner door from all

intrusion. He followed her, with looks of almost abject entreaty. 'Maiden, you will not betray my secret, will you? Promise, gentle one, that the word Venice shall not cross your lips; 'twould be the undoing of me should the Doge hear of that scappado!'

'I promise nothing,' she answered, 'and will have neither art nor part in your crooked plots; but inasmuch as it is not for me to meddle with your matters, and inasmuch as I desire your good offices toward our speedy rescue from this evil den, the word Venice shall, you may rest sure, not needlessly pass my lips. Ask no further pledge than this.'

Marino now made his exit in the same irregular fashion in which he had effected his entrance; as he mounted the wall by the help of a gnarled fig tree, he said, within himself, 'Yon is a brave girl, with heart of oak, and form of bending willow; if her father be made of the same metal, 'twill serve my turn to make a friend of him: he may help me at a pinch, by-and-bye!'

When Rosamond re-entered her gloomy chamber, she found it no longer solitary. A dark-complexioned maiden, clad in the Samian costume, stood in the midst of the cell, with hands folded and downcast eyes, as though awaiting her commands. A more attractive figure could not well be imagined. 'Tita,' for it was the under-bailiff's daughter, was of low stature, and rounded graceful *form*. She wore a scarlet boddice, and a double

skirt of white woollen stuff striped with brown. A tunic of the same material covered her shoulders ; its long and loose sleeves were rolled up above her dimpled elbows, and fastened on each side with a silver pin. A scarlet coif was placed above her glossy black tresses, which hung down her back, terminated by silver plates. Tita, though of Venetian origin on the father's side, had been brought up by her Samian mother, and was essentially Greek in appearance and temper, as well as in costume ; her full coral lips and lively black eyes bespoke great intelligence and feelings quickly excited : they beamed and dimpled with satisfaction as she stole a glance upward towards the pilgrim lady. Rosamond on her part gazed with surprise on the gracious little being before her ; but the interview with Marino had so ruffled and harassed her spirits, that she could not at once shake off the impression. Neither at home nor in the court of Earl Randle had she ever come in contact with so lawless a personage, nor seen the rules of chivalry so utterly ignored. Chivalry, the salt of society, the air she had breathed from childhood, had never taken root in the 'money-getting Republic ;' for want of it her capital had early become corrupt, and her canals and palaces swarmed with young men of the same type as Marino. But Rosamond, during her short stay at Venice, had seen little of this ; she was too girlish and inexperienced to look beneath the surface of society ; the Lady Clemence had shielded her well, and Ziani, the most

severe and aristocratic of Doges, had taken care to keep out of sight corruptions which he bewailed, but could not remedy. Marino, therefore, inspired her with wonder and disgust indescribable ; and now the idea that Tita had been a witness of, at least, the latter part of their strange colloquy, added to her annoyance. 'Not for a world,' thought she, 'would I have this innocent child deem me pleased with yon insolent lordling's visit ; she shall learn full soon that it was as unsought for as unwelcome.'

'Excellency,' said the little Samiote, with humble obeisance, 'I am sent by my father, under-bailiff to his highness, to tender to you what poor service my awkwardness will permit. So please you to command me.' She spoke in the dialect of her father's native Venice.

Rosamond smiled, and answered, in a voice still tremulous from recent fear, 'Thanks, pretty child ; those smooth and taper fingers of thine should minister to the Fairy Queen herself, rather than to a storm-beat pilgrim like me.'

'Alas, Madam,' replied Tita, 'in them lies my helplessness. I am one of the hundred loomstresses whom his highness employs to weave the produce of his silk-worms, and no other work is permitted to these hands, lest scratch or scar unfit them for their office ; nevertheless, I will do my best. Here are perfumes for the bath, lady, and here is a wreath for the banquet, if you will deign to wear it.'

‘Alas! kind stranger,’ said Rosamond, my pilgrim vows forbid me to use these softnesses; but cheer up,’ she added, seeing disappointment pictured in Tita’s face, ‘thy presence in itself is no small consolation—better than garland or perfume; I pray thee, sit down under the arch-way while I rest and bathe, and should yon graceless one return, give me speedy warning.’

‘He will not return,’ answered the maiden quickly, a crimson flush mingling with the clear olive of her complexion; ‘as the reed before the wind, so trembles he before one of fixed resolve. Lady, there are worse men than he here!’

She spoke in a whisper, and then glided forth to fulfil Rosamond’s behest. The little chaplet, deftly woven of blossoming-myrtle and lilac autumn crocus, was still in her hand; Rosamond observed this, and taking it from her, hung it reverently over the Dogaressa’s prayer-desk. Tita crossed herself in imitation of her new mistress, and smiled, well-pleased at this honour done to her handiwork.

‘Madonna has the fear of God before her eyes, she observed simply, ‘and we have not.’

‘Dost thou dwell here, under this roof, poor child?’ inquired the English lady. ‘Thou art of tender years to be set in so perilous a place.’

‘I have sojourned in this palace but a year,’ replied the Samiote, sorrowfully; ‘we dwelt in our cottage formerly, surrounded with mulberry-orchards whereof my father was overseer; my dear mother

and I tended the worms, and wound off and wove their silk ; Ah ! those were happy days, free as the breezes that swept over us from the cool north-west !'

'And what has wrought this dire change in thy lot ?' inquired Rosamond, compassionately. 'Speak, if the recital is not too painful !'

'My mother died,' said Tita, with a troubled look ; 'and soon after that it pleased our Doge to build a chamber for weaving here, in his own palace, and to forbid, on pain of stripes and fine, the use of any private loom on the island ; so I dwell here, and weave from sunrise till sundown for our master.'

'With no lack of company, it would seem,' rejoined Rosamond. 'Say, amongst the other loomstresses, if there is no friend or sisterly guide to counsel thee ?'

'My father counsels me,' answered the little maid, 'he bids me seek no intimate in that unblest crew ; but I hinder your Excellency by this unseemly talkativeness.'

Tita hovered round her self-elected mistress, smoothing every fold in the pilgrim garb, and every tress of the bright brown hair ; she started on hearing a step in the gallery, and promptly said, 'There comes my father : the banquet is served, Madam.' Rosamond understood the hint to lose no time, and rose to meet Sanuto's bailiff as soon as he appeared ; he took no notice of Tita, but beckoned to the English maiden to follow him. She observed that

the door of Sir Richard's cell stood ajar, and ventured to inquire where he was. 'With the Seignior Doge,' was her conductor's brief reply.

They soon quitted the cloistral and older part of Sanuto's palace, and entered a chain of newer and loftier apartments ; the banqueting-hall, copied perhaps from the Blachernal Palace at Constantinople, was circular, and lighted chiefly from a cupola which surmounted it. It was encircled by a gallery resting on round stone pillars ; and both the gallery and the intervals between the pillars were crowned with statuary, trophies taken from that plundered capital. They were mostly modern, and their subjects chosen from the most depraved and corrupting pages of mythology. There was a raised chair of state at the further end of the marble table, on which the feast was spread ; here sat the Doge, his face still pallid and drawn, one hand shading his brows, while the astute eyes beneath them perused the faces of the company assembled at his board. Their sunken orbs turned often and furtively towards Sir Richard who stood somewhat apart, playing with the hilt of his sword. His countenance looked dark and angry, and its gloom deepened as he saw his daughter enter the chamber. After due obeisance paid to the Doge, she advanced towards her father, whose movements, as before, were dogged closely by Sanuto's henchmen.

'What cheer, my lord?' she asked in English ;
'have you come to any treaty with this prince?'

‘None, Rosamond; he is slippery as an eel, and greedy as a pike; he pleads the remains of sickness, and so evades me when I press him to let us go; yet he is not too sick to prefer a monstrous claim for six hundred gold bezants, to be paid down to his steward, yonder Gandolfo, at Damietta; till it is paid, we must abide here.’ ‘The extortioner!’ exclaimed Rosamond, ‘on what plea can he fleece you thus?’

‘Oh, the plea is not far to fetch!’ replied her father, smiling bitterly. ‘As far as I could make out from this Gandolfo, who played the go-between, ’tis an old loan contracted by our Cœur de Lion of Sanuto’s father.’

Rosamond stood breathless. ‘Oh, monstrous!’ she said at last; ‘and is this airy claim to forge fetters for us here? Is there no remedy?’

‘I see none as yet,’ replied the knight, his brow contracting heavily. ‘Child, child, for myself I could say readily, “*Fiat voluntas Tuas*,” but for thee—’

She replied by pressing his hand, with a look full of courage and affection. ‘Despair not,’ she presently added; ‘I spy a hope, my father, and perhaps the holy Minorite may help us in our strait! Alack, you start and wince at the mention of his name: have you learnt aught new concerning him!’

Sir Richard evaded the question. ‘I asked of his fortunes,’ said he, ‘from that same rough varlet that fetched us hither from Patmos, but could not com-

prehend his answer ; a murrain on those ancient builders of Babel whose ambition turns my tongue into a stringless instrument ! Could I but treat with this Sanuto mouth to mouth—'

'You could never understand him, nor he you !' observed Rosamond, smiling ; 'rest content, dearest father, as it is, and bear we a cheerful visage before our enemies.'

The flourish of a bugle now sounded through the hall ; Sanuto advanced towards the maiden, and taking, or rather touching, her hand with the tips of his perfumed fingers, led her to a chair at his right hand. Sir Richard was placed on his left ; below them, six on either side, sate the twelve deputies from the Isles, whom Sanuto, in imitation of the parent republic, called his Senate. They were Greeks of ordinary appearance, and fawning subservient manner, chosen by him as the most apt tools for carrying out his schemes ; a few officers of the household, mostly Venetians, and a Latin bishop, thrust by him into the see of Samos, completed the party. Some musicians, stationed out of sight in the gallery, played on the harp, lute, and viol, Byzantine airs of a soft and languishing character.

Gandolfo, the house-steward, stood near his lord, and Rosamond remarked that he tasted every dish before presenting it to Sanuto. The same precaution was not observed towards his guests, and indeed their chance of swallowing poison at this repast was small ; Rosamond felt too anxious on her father's

and Fra Angelo's account to eat more than a few mouthfuls ; and the knight's keener appetite was blunted by scorn and indignation against his false host.

The rest of the company, though they seemed to quail whenever the Doge's steely eye fell upon them, mastered their fears sufficiently to do justice to the banquet. It was an abundant one, and served up on rich dishes, mostly of gold or silver. It consisted of a boar's head, tender and juicy mutton, fish of various kinds but indifferent flavour, game, and especially hares, whose flesh was absolutely perfumed by the wild-thyme on which they pastured. The chief delicacy to a foreign palate was the becca-fico. This little bird was dressed in the Greek fashion, split in the middle, and put on the grid-iron ; thus broiled, with a slice of bread and a sprig of the classical herb, parsley, it was, in truth, a 'dainty dish to set before a king !'

So thought Marinaccio, who sauntered into the room after all were seated, and coolly ordering off the senator seated next to Rosamond, appropriated not only his chair, but the plate of becca-fichi before him. 'Have you this bird in your England?' he inquired of the maiden. 'You shake your head : ah ! then you know not what good eating is ; make up for lost time, I counsel you, and eat without scruple, for they cost the Doge nothing !'

Rosamond could not forbear a smile, and the elder *Sanuto* bent uneasily forward to catch his son's

observation, but the perverse youth appeared bent on baffling his jealous curiosity. He remained silent, and engrossed in the delicate fare before him, till the Doge's attention was turned another way; then leaning confidentially towards Rosamond, he continued, 'See how this needy and greedy pack, whom my father misnames senators, do cringe and eat, and eat and cringe! they will not soon see such a feast again! Advent is near, and you, Madonna, who doubted our orthodoxy, will doubt it no more when you see how strictly we keep fast! You shall have vegetable-broth each day in the week, I promise you—Monday of beans, Tuesday of lentiles, Wednesday of chick-peas, and so on! This has been the rule from my childhood up.'

'A sorry choice,' said Rosamond, willing to humour him. 'And which of these dainties liked you best?'

'Oh, the beans,' he made answer; 'the beans assuredly; my foster-mother used to say I devoured them with such zest as 'twas a pleasure to behold! They call me "Pappa favo" yet i' the kitchen!'

Again Sanuto leaned forward, jealous of the good understanding apparently established between his captive and Marino. 'My son,' he said, with difficulty repressing his annoyance, 'this northern gentleman would fain hear something of the goings on in Egypt; you who are even now returned from that beleaguered coast, can satisfy him.'

Marinaccio's nonchalance was for the moment disturbed; but he recovered it quickly, and

venturing an entreating glance toward Rosamond, said, 'O my dear father, I and this reverend company of senators have oftentimes heard you say such matters are above the ken of inexperienced youth! Suffer me then to preserve a modest silence!'

'Now, by my ducal bonnet, a most untimely modesty,' thundered the Doge; 'answer this knight fully, Sirrah, and that without delay.'

'Oh, if your Highness unlock my tongue, it shall wag fast enough,' rejoined the youth, unabashed. 'Know then, Sir Englishman, that Egypt is a long country, but somewhat narrow, and Nile is a fair river, but muddy withal; the walls of Damietta are strong, but its warriors naught; I myself spitted three of them with my lance at one time, and the lance brake not!'

These facts, enunciated with amazing rapidity, and in the worst Norman-French, were but imperfectly understood by the company, and fell harmless on the ear of Sir Richard, to whom they were addrest. 'The lad's mien proclaims him a fool and braggart,' thought he; 'nevertheless we must not anger him.' 'Say, young Sir,' he continued aloud, 'under whose banner laid you lance in rest at Damietta?'

The ready lie was on Marino's lips; he turned to Rosamond with tragi-comic glance and shrug, seeking a sanction for it in her eyes. But no sanction was there: the language of those clear deep-blue eyes, severe in youthful beauty, though soft and *liquid* as the sky of Samos, abashed even his

effrontery. He muttered, indistinctly, 'Pardon—pardon, Seignior, 'tis not for me to speak of feats of arms in the presence of belted knight.'

'What unwonted sheepishness is this?' sneered the Doge, rousing himself from his half-recumbent posture, and surveying the group with irritable eye. 'My son, Sir Englishman, was by me confided to the Duke of Florence, the straight ally of Venice and of our poor dogedom; I hoped he would have fought under the silver lilies till Damietta fell—or he— But his seigniory was otherwise minded; and lo, he has returned to Samos again, pleading homesickness, and out-stripping with duteous haste his retainers, and the spoils he boasts he has won.'

'My retainers!' muttered Marino, in a voice pitched for Rosamond's ear alone; 'a score of disaffected caitiffs whom my father was glad to get rid of; I left them at Athens, where they straightway enlisted under less miserly lords; two trusty varlets only, sworn to secresy, returned with me hither.'

The feast was now drawing to a close, much to the relief of the Fyttons; never had they more thoroughly realised the truth of the inspired maxim, 'Better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.' It was brought to an abrupt termination by the entrance of a henchman, who whispered some intelligence in Gandolfo's ear. That official communicated the tidings to Sanuto, whose sunken eye kindled with eagerness.

‘Ah!’ said Marino, aside, ‘the money-bags from Iconium! I dare swear they are come, for I see the reflection of the gold in my father’s eye!’ So saying, he sprang forward to the Doge, who had risen and with tottering step was crossing the hall. ‘Let me be your prop, Monseignor,’ he said, offering the support of his arm, officiously.

‘I thank you, son,’ answered Sanuto; ‘I thank you for your disinterested care, but Gandolfo’s arm will suffice. Do you meanwhile take charge of my guests; show them the council-chamber, the loom-chambers, all, in short, of our state that they have not yet beheld; then let them take the air in the inner-quadrangle (mark me, the *inner*-quadrangle); then to their cells again under Tito’s escort: thou knowest the vaulted chambers are forbidden ground to thee.’

Marino turned on his heel, and sat down again. No sooner was the Doge gone, than he called to the under-bailiff, ‘Tito, more wine,’ and drained off the goblet at a draught; then recollecting himself, he joined Sir Richard and his daughter, who had snatched those few precious moments for private conversation. They now resigned themselves to Marino’s sullen guidance, and accompanied him through one dreary chamber after another, followed closely by Tito and some henchmen. Sir Richard satisfied himself that immense additions had been made by Sanuto to the original fortified monastery, *and that to complete its strength a high stone wall,*

the same which faced Rosamond's cloister, had been built entirely round it. These observations the knight made in silence, for Marino's mood was not one to be broken in upon. 'Yonder,' he said at last, pointing to a long range of building on the ground-floor—'yonder is the lodging of the galley-slaves: I doubt your friend, the Pisan friar, will find it no bad emblem of purgatory; he is now gone forth with a gang that are employed in bringing over the swamp you crossed this morning—this night he will lie on scanty straw among his brother felons unless, the moon being i' the full, they work till day-break!'

Rosamond trembled, and clung closer to her father, but spoke not a word. They presently ascended a winding stair; it led up to a great square tower, not very unlike a Norman keep, but wholly unadorned with device, fret-work, or corbel. It was four stories high, and each story contained one low square chamber, fitted up with looms. Here a bevy of women, some young, some old, some beautiful, some repulsive in appearance, were engaged in weaving the produce of Sanuto's silk-worms, their picturesque costumes varying according to the island or country they came from, the Naxiote white turban, the Samiote red coif, the Jewish or Arab 'bournouse.' In the uppermost chamber Rosamond observed pretty little Tita at work, and a glance from the maiden's innocent black eyes brought her comfort, which, however, Marino's next words, uttered in Italian,

dispelled. ‘The richest silks your Western dames can wear or covet, are woven here,’ he said. ‘My father, with commendable thrift, suffers none in his household to be idle ; but inasmuch as this department and all others needing womanly superintendence run to lavishness for want of it, he has of late sought diligently for a successor to my dead mother. Hitherto ;’ here Marino lowered his voice, and looked fixedly on the captive maiden—‘hitherto, the dames of Constantinople have turned a deaf ear to his prayer ; I should not wonder if the Dogaressa’s chain and jewelled bonnet were next laid at a Western maiden’s feet—as the price of her father’s freedom.’

Horror had blanched Rosamond’s cheek before the conclusion of this speech, and she might have fallen but for the support of Sir Richard’s left arm, passed quickly round her. With his right hand he as quickly drew his sword from his sheath, saying to Marino in a voice tremulous from passion, ‘Caitiff, what hast thou said, to wither my fair rose ? Avaunt, lest her eyes, re-opening, light on thy loathly presence ! Avaunt, I say !’

The fierce gesture which accompanied these words was intelligible enough. Marino skipped aside with undignified haste as Sir Richard’s biting blade flashed before him. Tito speedily interposed between the knight and his craven opponent, then summoned his daughter to Rosamond’s aid, bidding her bring *restoratives* quickly.

When the maiden returned to consciousness, she had difficulty in remembering where she was, or what had caused this sudden anguish. Her father had carried her to a balcony close by, and as she lay resting on his shoulder, a soft breeze touched her brow, and the azure sky arched over her; Tita's murmured 'Poveretta' sounded soothingly in her ear, recalling gentle thoughts.

'The saints help me,' she faintly said. 'I am a very poor weak-hearted pilgrim, not worthy of that high calling! Nevertheless,' she added, rising with sudden energy, 'I would risk limb, ay, and life too, to break away from here. Oh that I had ought of price to vow to blessed John of Jerusalem, so he would help me now!'

There was a pause; then the knight said solemnly; 'Lo, I do here, with willing mind, offer my manor of Fulshawe to God, in the name of that blessed martyr, renouncing all and every acre thereof; may He accept the vow, and grant thee, my Rosamond, thy heart's desire!'

'Words are too poor,' the maiden faintly answered, 'to pay you, O my dear father, for this kindness; but one thing more I beseech you grant! Let this vow when redeemed impoverish not my brothers, but me only; so shall I better look our Hugh and Edmund in the face!'

Sir Richard actually smiled. 'We will see to that by-and-bye,' he said, hopefully. 'Meanwhile here comes the losel Marino in most beseeching guise.'

How must we deal with him? for in truth, my knowledge of the Venetian tongue enabled me not to guess how he offended thee?’

‘Oh, it was too horrible,’ she replied, covering her face with both hands; ‘but the ills he bade me fear are of his father’s inflicting, not his. This youth, if wisely dealt with, might prove our friend.’

Marino now joined them, encouraged by Sir Richard’s more pacific mien. ‘Sir Knight,’ he began, ‘I pray you, make no long tarrying here; should the Doge learn that we have suffered you to gain this glimpse of the outer world, his wrath would know no bounds.’

‘Lead, Sir, and we follow,’ replied Sir Richard with stately courtesy.

Marino accordingly led them along the balcony, which extended round three sides of the square tower. A flight of steps from this point would, he said, bring them at once to the entrance of the vaulted chambers where they were lodged. Rosamond willingly followed, for she now sighed for the quiet of her cell as much as she had before dreaded it. Sir Richard was more inclined to linger and avail himself of the few moments allowed him to study the bird’s-eye view of Samos now presented to his gaze.

There was the sea heaving and working far below under the influence of a fresh north-westerly breeze; to the left it stretched away, dotted with green *islands*, the flat expanse of Icaria contrasting with

the noble hill-peaks that rose in the western extremity of Samos. Mount Kerki, the highest of these, wore a glittering crown of snow. A swampy district, clothed thickly with reeds and alders, lay southward between the palace and the bay where they had landed that morning. To the right was the coast of Anatolia, divided from Samos by a channel varying from two to five miles in width. The cliffs and projections on either side of this channel answered so exactly to one another as to make it evident that an earthquake or some such convulsion of nature had, in ages past, violently torn them asunder. Marino could not but divine the bent of the Englishman's thoughts. He turned to him, and said in his usual reckless fashion, 'We have shown you scurvy hospitality, Sir Knight, and no wonder you watch for the readiest occasion to give us the slip ; but be it known to you, the thing without me cannot be done.' He looked full at Sir Richard, a certain humorous and not unfriendly expression in his glazed eye redeeming in part the swaggering insolence of his manner.

'Your words, young Seignior, have a show of truth,' replied Sir Richard ; 'we are incaged here, and can but dash against the bars of our cage, except you set the door open for us. But seeing that our death can do you no pleasure and our life no injury, we look hopefully to your seigniory for deliverance ; if you will befriend us, our thanks and thankful service are your due ; if you will not, He in

whose name we girt on the sandals of pilgrimhood will avenge His own !'

'My father,' observed Marinaccio, 'would laugh at your threats ; he cares nought for his soul's health and would sell the fee-simple thereof for a pin ; but I—I—dare not altogether do that, nor—'

'Then, young man,' said the good knight, laying his strong hand on Marino's arm, 'hearken to one who wishes you well, and whose grey hairs give him license to counsel : leave, leave forthwith your wallowing in the mire ; turn to glory and to virtue—gird on the harness of true knight—'

'Hist !' whispered Marino ; 'you wax hot, and will be overheard ! No, no, Sir Englishman, I cannot do any of these things you name—but a pilgrimage or so, by-and-by, that might be ! or a fat offering to Saint Gregory, if my niggardliest of fathers will spare me but a handful of his Iconiote treasure.'

Sir Richard turned away in disgust. They silently proceeded down the flight of steps, then along the gallery leading to our pilgrims' cells. The young Venetian, though conscious he was treading forbidden ground, still lingered near them. At last he said in a pettish aggrieved tone, 'You checked me unmannerly, Sir Stranger, when discoursing of your safety, and you deserve therefore to be left to your fate ; nevertheless, I give you one more cast of the dice. The Doge is ever restless, fearing to abide in one place ; we must therefore make our escape ere he *compel* us to accompany him to some central isle ;

nor will that be hard ; the master of the galley-slaves hates him, and cleaves to me ; Tito, yonder, is ready to stab Gandolfo, his minion, and moreover views with kindling rage the Doge's favour towards his black-eyed girl. The ship-master who brought the Iconiote tribute is privy to my purpose, and will hover off Samos while awaiting me. I have keys my father knows not of, that give access to his armoury and treasure-vaults ; thus, you see, the game may soon be ours. But wait ! *pazienza !* the pot boils not yet ! We must make sure of Tito, not, mark me, by a bribe (he scorns that,) but through his daughter ; then we must avail us of the Doge's hour of weakness, and time our flight while one of his distempers is upon him.' He paused, as if wearied by the effort so much connected thought had cost him. 'Look you, Sir,' he added, 'should my father forget his nature, and open his closed money-bags to me, all this scheme falls to the ground. I am no man of strife, nor will I burn my fingers without need ; but should he drive me to extremities, why then you shall be partners of my flight ; yes, by the lance in St. Theodore's left hand,* you shall ; and your good sword and good courage will be no mean help to my plottings.'

* This saint, a yet earlier patron of Venice than St. Mark, was sculptured with the shield in his right, and the sword in his left hand. This blunder of the statuary was 'symbolical', says Houssaye's Chronicle, 'of the unwarlike tendency of the Venetian government, which ever preferred arts to arms.'

‘False as dicer’s oaths,’ was a proverb even in Sir Richard’s day, and his heart sank within him at the thought of having such a coadjutor in such an enterprise, one on the success of which hung the fate of his child. But there was no choice but to humour this strange being, and await the turn which events and his wayward fancy might take. *

Rosamond, more sanguine in disposition, and sharpened by her secret dread of Sanuto’s designs, scarcely heeded the reservation in Marino’s promises; she now eagerly bent forward. ‘The good Fra Angelo,’ she said—‘we cannot leave him behind; I beseech you, Seignior, extend your help to him.’

‘Ah, the friar?’ said Marino; ‘I had forgot! He shall be freed amongst the other slaves, and if need be, we will put a falchion in his hand, for beshrew me if he has not played the warrior in his day; he hath a martial bearing under that cowl of his.’

Tito, who had stood aloof stamping his foot with impatience and anxiety, now came forward. ‘Messer Marino, the Doge!’ was all he could say ere that personage appeared at the end of the gallery.

Marino turned pale, and clutched Rosamond’s wrist in his agony of fear; then gathering courage, as the sheep from desperation turns and stands at bay, he advanced towards his father. ‘I looked not for your speedy return, Monseignor,’ he said, apologetically.

‘Most like not,’ replied the Doge, his ‘red-sparkling eyes blabbing malice.’ ‘’Tis well that trusty *Gandolfo* espied your joint practisings against our

ducal state. To your chamber, Sirrah, under Gandolfo's escort ! Thou, Tito, thrust this Englishman into the lower prison, and give him prisoner's fare ; for the damsel, see she be alone in her cell ; let none communicate with her till morning prime ; I myself will then confer with her touching her father's treasons and their fitting punishment.'

These terrible words, doled out by weight and measure, were received by Sanuto's victims in deep silence. Gandolfo and Tito obeyed their lord's behests with seeming alacrity. Rosamond stretched her arms towards her father, and bade him a speechless, tearless adieu ; then she turned into her cell, a faint cold fear thrilling through her veins, and 'almost freezing up the heat of life.'

' Ah, *Poveretta !*' sobbed Tita, who from the end of the gallery had watched this appalling scene ; 'she is the very lamb my mother used to sing of which the greedy currish wolf so pitilessly entreated ! Wolf, did I say ? Nay, rather crafty, false, dastardly fox ; alas the day, that we should serve such a master ! Oft have I marvelled that my father could abide his roof, eating as it were the bread of iniquity ! and now if Tita's pleadings and Tita's tears can avail, he shall do so no longer ! I'll go to him at once and embrace his knees, and plead that gentle lady's cause, together with mine own, and he will not say me nay ! Courage, Tita ! the pilgrims' Lord shall smile on this thine enterprise !'

CHAPTER XI.

‘ A writing forged ! Saint Jude to speed !
Did ever knight so foul a deed ?’

Scott.

A STORMY conference took place at noon between Marinaccio and his father, the former bent on obtaining for the gratification of his own low pleasures, a share of the Iconiote treasure, the latter obstinately refusing to bestow any part of it on his spendthrift son. The quarrel had, with the help of fuel artfully heaped on by Gandolfo, already burst into a fierce blaze, when a messenger from Venice appeared, bearing despatches from Doge Ziani to his brother Doge. Marino, who possessed very ‘ poor and unhappy brains’ for plotting as well as for drinking, was confounded when he beheld the defeat of his deep-laid plan (for such he had considered it) for concealment. So infrequent and uncertain was the communication between the mother and daughter republics, that he had conceived himself secure from detection so soon as he had intercepted Ziani’s letter to his father, and forged a suitable reply to it. This notable document, professing to be penned by Sanuto himself, had not, however, deceived the subtle Venetian, and now, enclosed in a dignified and displeased

epistle from Ziani, it was placed in the hands of the astonished Sanuto.

He read it over and over again, examined the exterior, to which Marino had surreptitiously appended the great seal of the Cyclades, then exclaimed with a bewildered air, 'Come hither, Gandolfo, and expound to me this riddle ; I profess to you it passes my comprehension !'

Gandolfo was nothing loth to obey the command ; peering over his master's shoulder, he observed with affected nonchalance that the character in which it was writ, resembled marvellously that of Peppo the Sacristan, as any man might see by comparing it with the household rolls kept by the said Peppo.'

On this hint the Doge ordered Peppo into his presence, and keeping his eye fixed on the trembling official, bade Gandolfo read the missive aloud. 'Most potent Seignior and Duke of Venice,' it began, 'the tidings even now received from your pen are so black and heavy, that they have afflicted me past measure ; the more so, because my son, whose blaze of riot they recount, has hitherto given me no cause save for pride and jubilation. Were not the tidings of your highness's own inditing, scarce could I or this republic (whose rose and hope he is) credit them. That a youth of sweet conditions and noble parts should herd with base dicers is lamentable, nor shall he lack correction due for these unseemly pranks ; as for the debts by him contracted I do here promise, under my hand and seal, to liquidate

the same, from my ducal treasury, ere the current year close.'

'Ha!' growled Sanuto fiercely, 'you dared, young man, add this above all to your pestiferous pranks, that our ducal treasury should pay the cost of them? Herein, head of *Bacchus*, you reckoned without your host, and plucked no less a crime than treason on your head. What dare you mutter there? *Your* share in the Iconiote treasure, forsooth? Go to, 'tis not for such as you that I have carked and fretted and heaped up riches! I'll hear no more, Gandolfo! Lead him away, and with him Peppo, meet accomplice in so nefarious a fraud! To-morrow at noon my council shall decide their fate—meanwhile send Tito to me, and let my noon-day refection with lute and viol await me in the porphyry chamber!'

Tito appeared half-an-hour later, and had not his master been intent on drowning care in the choice wines and dulcet sounds with which ear and palate were regaled, he would have noted a strange gloom and bitterness in his demeanour. The man's countenance, surly at best when in presence of Sanuto, was now lowering and deadly pale; his hands clasped one another convulsively, as though some strong effort were required to enable him to receive his lord's commands without an outburst of feeling. 'Eccellenza, Si!' 'Eccellenza, Nò!' were the only replies he trusted himself to make, and those in so hoarse and changed a voice, that the tyrant's attention was roused.

‘Dreamest thou, fellow?’ he asked, peering nervously in Tito’s face ; as (to borrow Dante’s homely simile) ‘the tailor with failing eyesight peers into the eye of the needle which he is threading.’


‘If I have dreamed, I am now awake!’ replied the man, turning to leave the apartment.

Tito had many faults, but dissimulation was not one. He had that moment parted from his little daughter, who had prayed him with all the eloquence of tears, blushes, and earnest entreaty to rescue her, and with her the English pilgrims, from this den of iniquity. Astonished at her vehemence, which his first rude rebuffs did but increase, he had insisted on learning its cause.

Tita had long hung back, for she was afraid of her father, and afraid also of bringing mischief on his head ; by degrees, however, his keen searching inquiries drew out the truth. Her artless words revealed the corrupt and wicked atmosphere of the loom chambers wherein her days were spent, the subtle manner in which Sanuto worked to undermine the principles of its inmates, the insolent notice with which of late he had thought fit to honour her. Tito stood like one just wakened out of a sleep. He had always loved his child as the poor man of old loved his ‘little ewe lamb,’ but he had scarcely ever thought of her as more than a mere plaything ; now his eyes were opened to see her in a position of frightful risk ; fool that he was, he had never laid this to heart before ! and the sense of

this neglect rushed over his rude but not unfeeling mind like a flood. Before he had time to order these thoughts, the Doge's summons had been brought to him.

'Tito,' said the Doge, recalling him from the door, and addressing him in a wheedling tone, 'thou hast heard of the fresh delinquency of my unhappy Marino; robbery and forgery, added to lying and undutifulness! I, miserable father! deceived in my fondest hopes, am forced to give him up to public justice, and to the righteous award of my senate; to-morrow morning they will pass sentence upon him;' Sanuto's frame quivered as he spoke these words; 'and death, or life-long captivity, will doubtless be the meet punishment of his crimes. I am no Brutus to rejoice in my son's doom, but neither am I weak enough to screen him from it; no, these mutinous islanders must see that none may rebel with impunity; howbeit, that the paternal anguish beguile me not into relenting, I am minded to quit Samos with the morning light. Do thou, good fellow, expedite matters for this purpose; we will go to Naxos, bearing with us our treasure, and our pilgrim guests, neither of which are secure so near the mainland. Thou, good fellow, see that my galleys be manned, and my retainers ready, and let a strong escort bear the money-bags to the harbour. But how now? What ails thee? Why starest thou like a strangled man?'



‘I am no block, Sir,’ replied Tito, speaking with difficulty, ‘to hear unmoved tidings fraught with woe and shame—’

He was on the point of betraying himself, but the Doge interposed, fearful lest the next words should be of intercession for Marino. ‘Ay, ay, thou hast an old kindness to our house, and for that reason I bear with thy too plain speaking; but go to, fellow,’ he added, vehemently, ‘not Marinaccio, but I deserve thy compassion! think of mine age, unfriended and lonely, scarce a dog to care for me—scarce a man-at-arms in my following that would not cut my throat for the sake of the glittering collar round it! what worse ills could the purgatory yonder Pisan threatened me with, have to show?’

For once the hoary sinner spoke truth, and spoke it from the bitterness of his heart. None but honest Tito was ever permitted to witness such outbreaks from the lips of Sanuto, for they were rare, and forced from him, in spite of himself, by the inward agonies of remorse; at such times conscience arose up like the strong man armed, and the disquietude of his inmost soul could not be hidden.

The under-bailiff turned a second time to go, but the Doge’s jewelled finger beckoned him back. ‘Know, Tito,’ he said, in his most prolix and embarrassed manner, ‘that weighing the exigencies of the state in the balance of policy, seeing also that by reason of my son’s vices our court is grown into evil repute and forsaken by the island nobles and

their haughty dames, we have resolved to wive it. Our wooing shall be short, and cannot fail to speed, and thou, good Tito, shalt be serviceable to me therein, by setting artfully before this lady, the richness of the ducal coronet, and on the other hand, the deadly peril of her father should she say, Nay ! Let thy Tita, tutored well by thee, help to bend her to our will ; these English maidens, we have heard, are coy and wild, wherefore spare neither threats nor blandishments ! and now, ere thou dost fly to execute my commands, drink to the good success of this our enterprise,'

So saying, Sanuto half filled a goblet with the famed Cyprus wine, and, after eyeing its amethyst sparkle lovingly, pushed it across the table to Tito. A condescension so unusual arrested the wondering attention of the menials, who, out of ear-shot, stood waiting their master's commands ; nor did it fail to excite the envious rage of Gandolfo as he re-entered the chamber with his wonted noiseless step. But the bailiff either was, or appeared, insensible to this mark of favour. He set down the untasted goblet, saying bluffly, ' No, *maffè*, the foul water our prisoners drink, were less loathsome to my palate than this draught ! I'll have none on't ! ' As he spoke, he struck the table with his hand with such force, that it reeled again.

Sanuto leaped up, crying, ' Treason ! treason ! seize the villain ! ' and Gandolfo with no reluctant step *hastened* to obey his master's behest. Tito struggled

lustily, but was overborne by numbers, and the ducal guards, six to one, pinioned him and dragged him away. Fierce was the clamour, loud the din, that now resounded through the palace. The arrest of Marino and Peppo, and the inhospitable usage shown to our pilgrims, had already caused considerable excitement among its denizens, and now the news of Tito's disgrace was greeted with expressions of open discontent. A disorderly mob followed him to the vaulted chamber where he too was to be lodged that night, crying out, 'Courage, Tito! fear nothing, honest Tito, they shall not hurt a hair of thy head! Gandolfo shall perish first!'

'Thanks, good friends!' responded Tito, who had no sooner uttered those rash words in Sanuto's presence than he bitterly rued them; 'thanks for your good-will, but do nothing unadvisedly! one boon only I pray you obtain for me, and that is a last good-night from my Tita, whose wailings I hear drawing nigh!'

The maiden's grief was indeed frantic, and grew more so as the by-standers fell back and made way for her to approach her father. She wept and clasped his knees, and called on every saint in the Greek calendar, for help.

The bailiff stroked her glossy head with his hard palm, while something like a tear twinkled in his eye. 'Pray you, sweet chuck, be patient,' he whispered, ashamed of his unwonted softness; then assuming a sterner tone, as the child's sobs redoubled,

he added, 'Hark ye, Tita, the saints help none but such as help themselves; take this, therefore,' and he pressed a long iron key into her hand, 'hide it about thee, and when this hubbub is o'er, unlock Peppo's turret door with it; bid him get speech with the captain of the galleys, and spirit away Messer Marino if he can! but quick, quick, to-morrow will be too late; thou, child, quit this accursed place also, and betake thee to thy mother's sister's house at Smyrna. Anna Xylaloe will give thee shelter till I can get free to join thee. Soft, one word more. The Doge keeps the keys of his vaulted chamber at his girdle, or under his pillow; let Peppo know this, and bid him speed, but speed warily.'

As sunrise turns the grey landscape into brightness, so these words changed Tita's mournful despair into energy. She raised her eyes with a glance of keen intelligence, and hiding away the precious key in the folds of her vest, shrunk back and leaned in silence against the cloister wall, till the procession had passed by. Then she sprang away like a fawn, followed by the rude condolences or jests of Tito's comrades.

The release of Peppo was her first aim, and a needful preliminary to the deliverance of his fellow-prisoners; with a view to this, Tita stole up to the turret where he was now confined. She was arrested, however, by the sight of an armed man placed at his door, and fearing detection, she hid *herself* in an empty chamber at the foot of the

turret. Wearily did the time pass, each moment appearing to lag more slowly than the last, while the pulsations of her heart grew quicker and quicker. Sometimes she thought she heard herself called, and fancied that the length of her absence from the loom had created suspicion, and that the duenna, under whose eye she worked, was in angry pursuit of her. While these and many other busy fears passed through her brain, the afternoon sped by. Grey evening stole on, and the shadows athwart the low-browed vault deepened and darkened. The stir and tramp of feet through the palace gradually subsided, and were succeeded by a great stillness. This was after a while broken by a long heavy yawn from the sentinel above.

‘Faith,’ the man exclaimed, stretching himself, ‘this is heavy work ; I could snore upon the flint for very weariness, but fear lest the bully Gandolfo should report me asleep at my post ! I’ll to the buttery for a mouthful of meat, and hie me back before one could say three Aves !’

So saying, he proceeded to carry his resolution into effect, and Tita, scarcely waiting till the echo of his heavy step had died away, flew up-stairs and applied her key to the lock of Peppo’s door. Fortune favoured her beyond her utmost hopes. Peppo stood there, alert and collected, ready to receive and fully to apprehend her father’s messages, and so eager to carry them out, that he scarce tarried to utter the words, ‘Brava Tita !’ ere he was lost in

the twilight. Then for the first time the damsel was struck with a consciousness of her own audacity in freeing a state prisoner of the Doge ; the instinct of self-preservation arose strong within her, and she determined to betake herself to the loom-chamber and resume her morning's work with as cool and unconcerned an air as she could assume.

On the way thither, she passed by a well in the court-yard, and thinking herself unobserved, flung into it the key with which she had set Peppo at liberty. She breathed more freely when rid of this suspicious implement, and was able to resume her place at the loom with composure, though all eyes were upon her. A lamp swinging from the ceiling threw its light on the rainbow-tinted silks, and on Tita's scarlet coif and glossy locks, but left her features in shade, as she bent sedulously over her pattern.

Never had the occupants of that chamber appeared more repulsive than now. The disorder which reigned throughout the palace had reached this portion of it, and Tita was distracted by the buzz of voices, and irritated and frightened by the taunts levelled at herself by her jealous companions.

'Ah ! proud Tita,' sneered the duenna, 'where are thy scornful airs, thy nice scruples ? methinks it is time to come down from these high conceits, now thy father's head sits tickle on his shoulders ! What, insolent still ? would'st kill me with the glance of *those black eyes* ? To your work, Mistress, or the

supervisor shall hear of this day's idleness, and report it to his Highness !'

'But what's the hubbub now ?' added the virago, observing a great stir at the other end of the apartment.

'A wager ! a wager !' exclaimed several harsh voices at once. 'Euphrosyne will have it that before three days our Marinaccio will be found strangled, and our new Dogaressa shall be wooed and wed ! a silver piece to an embroidered girdle, she says !'

'Peace, fools,' said thé duenna, 'stone walls have ears and babbling tongues also ! I hear the supervisor's step on the stair. To tread and thrum, therefore, and let not your eyes so much as underpeep their lids.'

A sullen silence ensued, and remained unbroken while the above-named official made his round. When he was gone, and evening closed in, most of the loomstresses were dismissed to their homes, but Tita and a few more remained to complete their tasks. While the scarf she was weaving grew under the maiden's hand, rich crimson, gold, and deep blue blending exquisitely with grey and olive and sober neutral tints, her mind turned with feverish anxiety to the probable events of the night. Peppo's escape must soon be discovered, and it was impossible to say what effect the disclosure might have on Sanuto. If, as her father had suggested, the Sacristan could effect a meeting with the captain of the galleys, the Doge might indeed tremble for his safety, for that officer was a strong partizan of

Messer Marino ; what if he should set the slaves free, and organize an attack on the palace ? Many of the islanders would really join the enterprise, she knew, for the Doge was hated and despised universally. He was coward as well as tyrant, moreover, and would easily be intimidated into accepting any terms that might be offered him. Then Messer Marino would be set free ! and she rejoiced in the thought, for in common with all the Samiotes, Tita felt a lingering kindness towards the Doge's prodigal son ; and her father would be set free, and the pilgrims, and together they would leave that detested place ; and perhaps, O vision of brightness, Tita might be permitted to attach herself to the English lady, and minister to her as long as she should remain in the East.

Absorbed in these cogitations, Tita scarcely heeded the comers and goers who passed and repassed her at her work. At length she heard a voice say, 'The Doge ? asked ye of him ? he is sore perturbed to-night, and was seen an hour since, going towards the vaulted chambers alone, and with a troubled step.'

'Alone ?' exclaimed the other speaker in a voice of surprise. 'That is strange indeed, as rare a sight as the shadowless man legends tell of. Where then is Gandolfo ?'

'Oh, Messer Gandolfo is gone down to the harbour, called there on some secret matter of great urgency, and will return anon, I heard one say.'

Tita's heart leaped within her ; ' Now the saints be praised,' said she, inwardly, ' that the crafty, meddling, bloody-minded Gandolfo is absent : a silver piece to a broidered girdle, as Euphrosyne would say, that Peppo has lured him away on some false pretext. If so, they will hold him fast till the blow is struck, and without him our Doge is as a body without a spirit, or a swordsman whose right thumb is cut off.'

A fresh person now rushed into the chamber, exclaiming, ' Heard ye the news? Peppo is gone, clean escaped ! the Doge raves, men are sent after their fugitive, but hitherto with no success ; either he is too cunning, or they are too slack in their pursuit.'

The buzz of voices became louder than before, and our Tita shivered as the oft-repeated question smote her ear. ' How chanced it ? who let him go ?' and then they looked towards her, or she fancied they did so, with meaning glances and raised eyebrows.

Darkness was gathering amain, and a gong sounded forth through every cloister, vault, and gallery, its curfew note. There was nothing soothing in that deep clang, which rather spoke of fear and unrest, and always smote mournfully on the imagination of the little Greek maiden. This evening it was the appointed signal for her labours to close, and she was about to cover up her loom dreamily and in silence, when the supervisor once more presented himself. ' Is Tita here ?' he asked. ' His highness

will speak with her forthwith ; come, maiden, and tarry not.'

The girl arose and followed him, as quickly as her trembling feet would permit. She quivered rather from excitement than fear, and smiled almost exultingly as her conductor whispered, 'If thou knowest more than others, little one, seal up thy cherry lips, and speak no word ! Our master's fury has died down into the sullen mood, which is most dangerous.'

They directed their steps, not as Tita had expected towards the porphyry-chamber, but downwards till they reached the gloomy vestibule leading to the vaults. Here they stopped, seeing no one in the long low gallery that stretched before them. It was indeed difficult to discern any object in such a depth of shadow ; the officer paused to listen, and presently something like the turning of a heavy door on its hinges was faintly heard ; it proceeded from that quarter of the cloister where, rumour whispered, Sanuto's hoards of gold and silver lay.

The Doge was known to be very jealous of any approach to this, the temple of his heart's worship ; its key was never absent from his girdle or his hand, and his visits to it were most often paid at night while other men slept. The supervisor, therefore, advanced towards it with caution, carrying his lantern half closed in his hand. Tita meanwhile sank down on a stone bench in the vestibule, and followed with *her eyes* the light as it flitted along, throwing strange

glimmerings and occasionally bright flashes on the vault overhead. It gleamed a moment on the door within which Rosamond sat, a captive and alone, struggling with true pilgrim heart against the assaults of despair. It flashed on bold Sir Richard's prison and through a chink in the strong oaken door, causing him to start up with revived expectation. It threw its mild ray on the cell where Tito lay, and on a cell just beyond his, which his child could not think of, or look towards, without shuddering. That was the torture-chamber.

To us the idea conveyed by the word torture seems vague and unreal, but to Sanuto's vassals it was a dread, ever-present reality. It was an established maxim in that age, that truth could only be wrung from the treacherous and quick-witted Greek by means of it, and princes of far milder character than our Doge did not scruple to employ it. 'Prisoners,' says a chronicler of that day, 'were tortured in great numbers by the Byzantine government;' nor did the Venetians hesitate to establish their Eastern conquests by the same merciless machinery which their predecessors had adopted; only it suited the genius of their nation to throw a deeper mystery around its horrors.

The supervisor and his lantern had disappeared under the archway of the treasure-vault, and Tita sat alone, her girlish courage fast oozing out in the gloom and uncertainty; one object only cheered her, and that was a strip of white sheeny moonlight cast

on the pavement at her feet from a slit overhead. On this she kept her eyes fixed, as on a gracious token that hope and help could find their way even to that dim cave ; whatever crime, whatever suffering its recesses might witness that night, there was One who beheld all, remembered all, would avenge all ! ‘ Were not these things noted in His Book ? ’

The patch of glistening light was suddenly eclipsed, and looking up, the startled girl saw a lank long figure letting itself cautiously down from the aperture above to the stone bench. She sprang up, crossing herself, and gasping out ‘ Holy Mother ! ’tis Messer Marino or his ghost I see.’

‘ No ghost,’ replied he, laying a substantial hand on her shoulder, ‘ but as pretty a piece of flesh as any in Samos ; only half dead for lack of breath, and my ribs, being not of steel, sore bruised in passing through yonder loop-hole ! I must rest here a moment, and do thou, girl, keep watch ; if my father finds me, he will not spare to make a ghost of me ! ’

‘ He will not indeed ! ’ murmured the terrified Tita ; ‘ and how does your Highness think to escape ? He will be here anon, being even now, as I believe, in his treasury yonder.’

‘ In his treasury ? that is unlucky, for through that same vault must I pass to join my friends without ! Hark ye, girl, betray me not, for here, under this bench, must I crouch till the Doge has gone by ; then one spring, and I am free.’

‘Excellency, how!’ asked Tita, completely confounded. ‘The Doge alone has the key of that vault, and will surely lock it behind him; nay, more, should your Highness succeed in getting in, how could that forward your escape?’

‘Simple one,’ replied Marino, ‘knowest not that my wise father has dug a passage underground from this his treasury to Samos harbour! that so in case of revolt he and his loved money-bags may escape together? He thinks none but he hath the key, but in this his minion Gandolfo outwitted him, causing a second to be made; and we, that is, Peppo and the galley-master, have outwitted Gandolfo, ta’en him prisoner, and secured that same key, which our friends have to me conveyed. Now, pretty one, keep thou my counsel, and take this emerald to pay thee beforehand for thy discretion.’

Tita had scarcely time to push back the trinket, when the supervisor appeared at the further end of the gallery, and beckoned her to join him. Marinaccio crept under the bench, clutching in his hand the important key, and muttering to himself, ‘Now comes the tug of war! running away I find easy enough, but in sooth, fighting turns my heart’s blood to jelly! Good now, I am resolved what to do; with this same key of the vaults I will set free the stout Englishman, and he shall fight, whilst I wink and hold out my weapon from behind him.’

Having thus settled the order of precedence between himself and Sir Richard to his own entire

satisfaction, Marino watched his father's egress from the treasury. The Doge walked feebly, attended, much to his son's surprise, by two senators, the most pliant of that servile body. He paused to lock the strong door after him, then passed with his counselors into the opposite chamber of torture, or as it was commonly called, of justice. The under-bailiff, guarded by some henchmen, was brought to him here.

Hither also Tita was summoned. She ventured a glance towards her father, and saw his face rigid, unmoved, and almost sarcastic in its expression. He might have been mistaken for the judge, and Sanuto for the accused, so panic-stricken and lowering was the Doge's countenance. In truth, the old man was almost beside himself; Peppo's flight, and Gandolfo's mysterious disappearance, had troubled and bewildered him; signs of mutiny in his own household were apparent, so that he knew not who was friend and who was foe; and now a hint from some anonymous quarter had led him to investigate more closely the state of his money-bags, and he had found them strangely tampered with, much gold and silver abstracted recently, and lead and sand artfully placed in their room. The bitterness of this loss was not mitigated by a lurking suspicion that Gandolfo was concerned in it. Anxious to repel an idea so fatal to his security, the Doge made a desperate endeavour to fasten the guilt of the robbery on some other person. He wrought himself up to believe that it rested with Peppo the sacristan, aided and abetted

by Tito and others ; on this charge the under-bailiff and his daughter were now placed before him, ignorant, however, of the nature of the suspicions entertained against them.

The Doge took his seat on a raised chair, one of his counsellors on either side ; behind him was an alcove wherein stood a functionary in close-fitting buff jerkin, with bare sinewy arms, leaning on a two-handed sword. This was the public executioner, a Venetian, hardened by twenty years' practice in his grim vocation. His figure stood out against an appropriate background of grey stone wall, hung with nooses, cords, and iron implements of strange fashion. A fire glimmered on the hearth at that end of the chamber.

The door was closed on this assembly, and Tita's heart would have sunk within her as it slowly turned on its hinges, had she not remembered that thereby Marino's escape was much facilitated. 'If Messer Marino reached his friends in safety, surely he could do no less than send succour to her father ; bird-witted and whimsical though he might be, he could not prove so thankless as to forget Tito !'

So reasoned she, till recalled to a sense of the present exigency, by Sanuto's voice, husky and quavering. 'This implement,' he said, holding up a wet and shining key, 'was found even now at the bottom of the well in our "Cortile Vecchio." 'Tis the key whereby Filippo, our sacristan, commonly called Peppo, was set free from the imprisonment

to which we had justly doomed him ; this key was last seen in the hand of Tito, our under-bailiff, arrested this noon for a treasonable and malicious attempt on our ducal person ; seeing that he himself was put in prison, so as to be unable, however willing, to liberate the said Filippo or Peppo, we are set on discovering, for the good of our republic and for our own safety, who were the said Tito's abettors, in this and other felonious practices. Speak, Tito, to whom didst thou surrender this key ?

The unhappy father, unprepared for this searching question, hesitated to answer it, and a deep flush burnt on his swarthy cheek. 'Excellency,' he said at length, 'I call San Niccolò to witness, that I never harboured a thought of treason against you ; yea, churlish as your service has ever been, I have, until this very night, tendered it dearly ; what cause has changed these my loyal respects to gall and wormwood, it boots not now to tell ; the thought of bitterness has, for lack of opportunity, borne no fruit ; it is enough you should know that I have never, so help me Heaven and San Niccolò, done you wrong.'

'This is mere shuffling, fellow,' replied the Doge, 'thou and Peppo, 'tis well known, have been used to herd together, keeping apart from the rest of my followers ; 'tis therefore no strained conclusion that thou hast caused him to be set free, that together you might plunder my treasure vaults. If his was *the hand* to execute, thine was the brain to scheme

this villainy, and by fair means or foul I will get to the bottom on't.'

Tito started as the definite charge of robbery was brought against him. The gesture which proceeded simply from amazement, was construed by Sanuto and his servile counsellors into an evidence of guilt and confusion, and the Doge proceeded with more confidence.

'Let my Procurator be called and declare what sum hath been thus basely filched from us ; this done, your seigniors shall give me your best counsels how guilt may be punished, and the money recovered.'

There was a dead pause while the Doge's command was obeyed ; the official whom, in imitation of the parent republic, he named Procurator, presently appeared, but with pale and perturbed mien. 'Alas ! your Seigniory,' he said, in reply to Sanuto's first interrogation, 'the sum of seven hundred bezants stolen from your exchequer is but a feather compared with the loss I now have to tell ; some villain has purloined the reliquary from Gregory's shrine, with its priceless contents.'

The assembly received this intelligence with breathless dismay ; only Sanuto uttered a suppressed sound like the yell of a bear, deprived of her cubs. He sank down upon his seat, looking round him with bewildered stare ; the by-standers nudged one another, whispering, 'Let us look to ourselves, the falling sickness is on him.'

It passed away, however; the Doge muttered Gandolfo's name, and rolled his eyes round the dusky chamber, as though in search of him, then remembering his absence and its cause, he beckoned the Procurator to come near. 'Question that caitiff Tito,' he said, 'concerning this; question him straitly; if he answer not, to the torture with him, straight!'

An agonized cry burst from Tita at these words, but her father chid her sharply for it, then addressing himself to Sanuto, he spoke out manfully, 'Your suspicions, Excellency, point amiss, for by Gregory's hand and Gregory too, I know nothing of this theft; if Peppo has ta'en this casket, and, faith! the thing seems likely, I dare swear he is but keeping it for Messer Marino.'

The suggestion, so far from appeasing, inflamed Sanuto's rage. 'What ho!' he said, 'fetch Messer Marino hither, and let these plotters be confronted; when flint and tinder meet, light must needs come of it.' He laughed in bitterness at his own jest, and the senators echoed his mirth faintly.

Again a pause ensued, lengthened out so unaccountably that at last the Doge despatched a second messenger after the first. 'What means this delay?' he asked petulantly. 'Am I Doge, or am I not?' The question was an impolitic one, and had he looked up he would have read a very unsatisfactory answer to it in the faces of his vassals, but his eyes ~~were~~ rigidly fixed on the ground.

At last both messengers returned together, followed by a motley group of servitors and men-at-arms, whom the sight of their Doge scarcely restrained from rushing pell-mell into the chamber. 'My lord, he is fled—he is gone! the door of his cell found we locked, but the cell empty! he hath crept up the chimney, for the iron bars that guarded it at top have been wrenched away by some hand from without, and lie on the floor! the pilgrims are gone also, and their cell-doors stand open! so does that of the treasure chamber, locked by your own hand not half-an-hour ago!'

This climax worked up Sanuto's mind to the extremity of rage, disquietude, and alarm. His brain whirled and his features grew livid, yet could he distinctly note the various gestures and observations of the by-standers on these marvellous tidings. He recognized a lurking smile at the corners of Tita's mouth, and heard her father exclaim in the exuberance of his joy, 'Bravo, Marinaccio!' while he smote his manacled hands together. Ah, Tito, you shall pay dear for this honest impulse; your child sees Sanuto's brow lowering upon you, and trembles, not without cause; unsatisfied revenge and avarice are now masters of his soul, and he takes instant measures to appease them; he calls the Procurator, whom he knows to be peculiarly obnoxious to Marino, bids him take fifty men-at-arms, and march at once to the harbour to intercept the fugitives. He points out to him the exact spot where the subterranean

passage emerges, and bids him watch for them there, and cut them down rather than one should escape. The men are to be provided with shafts tipped with flax, and Greek fire to set them a-blaze ; in case the party should have embarked, these missiles are to be discharged after them without fear or favour. When their vessel has thus been crippled, she may without difficulty be pursued and overtaken, and the spoil recovered.

Thus much for avarice ; it is now the turn of revenge. The doors are closed, and all but three or four of Sanuto's creatures excluded. The Doge concludes his inquisition in nervous haste, for he knows that each minute is precious. The under-bailiff has entrenched himself in dogged silence, and Sanuto, finding him impracticable, turns his sunken grey eye on Tita. 'Base lozel,' he mutters, 'and thou, stubborn traitress, betwixt you two lies the guilt of this foul rebellion. The escape of my unnatural son, the loss of my treasure, yea, of the relic which princes envied, all this and more, I thank you for ; princes' thanks, men say, should not be paid in words alone, wherefore—'

'Excellency,' said the bailiff's daughter, looking her tyrant full in the face, while her curdling cheek belied the freedom of her speech. 'Excellency, hear me ; my father is no traitor, but a man rich in honesty, and most true to your house and line ; when in sudden wrath he spake roughly to your Highness *to-day*, the fault lay with me, who madly goaded

him on ; when Peppo fled, 'twas my hand freed him, and none other ; when Messer Marino escaped, I knew of it, and by my silence saved his life ; therefore, according to your law, I must die ; I refuse not to die, Excellency, though death is bitter to the young ; but, oh ! in mercy, in justice, let my father go !'

'Tita !' exclaimed the under-bailiff ; but his daughter turned imploringly towards him, and laid her soft hand on his mouth. 'Tita,' he again struggled to say, but the Procurator stopped him with a touch of his white wand, and the words, 'Silence ! our lord and Doge is about to pronounce sentence.'

The Doge rose accordingly. 'Maiden,' he said in a voice of strained gentleness, 'truth, like charity, covers the multitude of sins ; this thine ingenuous confession, therefore, hath saved thy life ; but forasmuch as by thy rash meddling, irreparable mischief has been done to my state, we adjudge thee to ten years' captivity.'

He paused ; Tito wrung his fettered hands, and looked fiercely, despairingly upward, as though invoking the justice of Heaven ; the girl drooped her head and uttered no sound. The Doge continued, 'Ten years' captivity, under our own roof, beneath our own eye, cheered by dance and song, by feast and revel, sure 'tis a penance every Samiote daughter might envy ! but enough of this ; now, Tito, stand forth.'

‘My father, oh, my father!’ cried Tita, flinging herself at the Doge’s feet in her agony, ‘in mercy, in justice, Sire, let my father go!’

‘Your father’s doom rests with himself, girl,’ replied Sanuto; ‘and you will do the part of a good and loving child by persuading him to accept my terms. See you here, Tito, my son and his choice counsellor Peppo repose unbounded trust in thee! by thy mediation, therefore, much strife and bloodshed may this night be saved! At the price of this mediation, I will spare thee! Swear only to observe my commands to the letter; go down to the harbour, duly escorted, lure me these runagates back, secure my relic, my treasure, and in so doing, secure thine own pardon! I know Marinaccio, he was ever easily duped by promises, which thou, good Tito, need’st not spare to make—’

‘And thou, false Doge, wilt not spare to break!’ cried the bailiff, noting a twinkle of fiendish import in Sanuto’s eye. ‘How now, is Tito to be your decoy-bird, in this vile plot? Do you take me for Gandolfo, that you bid me wallow in such filthy mire as this? Go to, Seignior, were you a hundred Doges in one, I would not do your bidding.’

‘Bear witness all,’ said the Doge, turning to the two or three sycophants whom he had kept near him, ‘that this man despises our clemency, and plucks down death upon himself; but first, by the just law of Venice, he must pay for his traitorous words by loss of sight. Haste, therefore, Cecco, bring the

irons ; the rest of his sentence shall be executed at our greater leisure.' * * * * *

While these confusions arose in Sanuto's palace, Sanuto's galley-slaves worked on, strongly guarded, and chained together in couples. It had pleased the Doge, as we have already said, to attach to Angelo of Pisa a companion of brutal and depraved habits. Long, therefore, and mournful had that day appeared to the friar, compelled to hear his yoke-fellow's ribaldry from noon till evening. He had nothing to oppose to it but his own example of patient industry, and of devout observance of the prescribed hours of prayer. But it was 'pain and grief' to him to keep silence, and as he plied his task on the edge of the cheerless swamp, he said within himself, 'Had Francis, my brother, been here, his mighty eloquence might have wrought a change in the caitiff at my side ; I, less gifted, can but hold my peace and pray ; yet perchance, as the water-mint beneath my feet yields sweeter fragrance for the crushing, so prayer and patience may win upon a wretch so hard.'

It had chanced early in the day that the captain of the galley-slaves making his round, had paused near the friar, and narrowly scanned his bearing. Angelo had not looked up nor perceived the scrutiny, but when hour after hour it was repeated, he became aware of it, and marvelled what the cause might be. When the time for evening refecton and brief rest came on, the captain once more drew near, and this

time accosted him. He said briefly, 'Thou hast wrought well, stranger, and merited this guerdon ;' and as he spoke, he unlocked his fetters and unloosed him from his yoke-fellow, committing the other to the charge of one of his subalterns.

'Gramercy, friend,' answered the friar, 'God remember this thy charity !'

'I hope He will,' rejoined the other ; 'there is need, for in truth, mine ill deeds kick the beam.'

Angelo glanced upward ; 'there is mercy with Him, that he may be feared,' he said. The man paused, then paced up and down irresolutely.

'Say that word to-morrow, Friar,' he exclaimed, 'and it may be I will hearken ; the more because I know thee to be no craven, but one that fought by great Alexios' side ; you stare on me ? Ay, I too once served the kingly Komnenos ; remembering that, it irked me to see you linked to yonder wretch. See, here is supper ; arise, and eat in peace !'

It was not without a struggle that Angelo had subdued the violent emotions aroused in him by the man's words ; he mastered himself, however, and replied, 'I had not looked for so much kindness here ; I pray thee, friend, show as much kindness to thine own sinful soul, and leave not repentance to the morrow.'

The man was much moved. 'Hark ye, Friar,' he said, pointing in the direction of the ducal residence, 'strange things are working within those walls to-night. Messer Marino's life is in jeopardy, and we,

my friends and I, are banded together to rescue him ; if thou art minded to escape, we will take thee aboard this night and carry thee with us to the coast of Anatolia ; wilt thou come with us ?

‘ I would fain do so,’ replied the friar, ‘ but I have friends in yonder stronghold whom ’twere both sin and grief to leave behind. I may not stir till they are safe.’

‘ Oh, they are cared for,’ replied the captain. ‘ I hold myself pledged to Peppo and to Tito, ay, and to one other whose lightest word is law to me, that not an hair of their heads shall fall.’

‘ The Helper of the friendless be praised for this !’ exclaimed the friar with clasped hands ; ‘ now go, friend, and take with thee, in God’s name, this charge—see that no innocent blood be shed this night.’

The man nodded. ‘ In sooth, Sir Knight (your pardon, I should have said, Sir Friar), there is little innocent blood to be found in yonder keep ; the men are cut-throats and liars ; the women false and spiteful, all but one, and she, like a dove trooping with crows, is pecked at by her fellows. If the whole hornet’s nest could be smoked at once, the world were none the poorer ! But fear not ! this evening’s is likely to prove unbloody work, for not one of the Doge’s followers will strike a stroke for him ; Gandolfo, his minister of crime, is in my hands already ; moreover, our Marinaccio is no man of violence ; his blood has been so thinned by riot

and revel, that it runs slackly in his veins ; therefore our victory will be at no cost of life. Nevertheless, take this falchion, Seignior, for it is not well to be wholly unarmed in this wild covert. Climb yonder knoll, whence you can see the palace and harbour ; there watch and wait till I despatch a guide to lead you to our place of embarkation.'

The man departed at a rapid pace, and Angelo at once followed his counsel, and made his way through a low thicket of bay, myrtle, and clematis, to the little eminence he had pointed out. The queen of night had proceeded some way on her trackless path, throwing a trail of brightness on thousands of little waves and on the naked cliffs, whose feet they kissed. 'The shower of moonlight fell as still and clear' on Sanuto's gloomy abode as though it had been the dwelling-place of peace and innocence ; the open space around it was bathed in a radiance like that of new-fallen snow, and no sounds beyond the usual hum and stir of a garrisoned place issued from it. The friar, fatigued by toil of so unwonted a nature, sat down to eat the girdle-cake and dried figs left him by his courteous jailor. He then drank at an 'arched fountain cold,' whose waters bubbled up hard by. Thus refreshed, he pondered anxiously yet hopefully over the communications just made to him, and over the cheering probability of his fellow-prisoners' speedy release. While he did so, his hand mechanically grasped the falchion, and his fingers ran lightly along its edge, as the parent's

hand caresses the bright locks of a long-lost child ; that emotion however was transient, and he laid the weapon by, murmuring, ‘ No, no, weak heart, arms of other temper, yea, a sword bathed in heaven, befit thee now ! Thou art enrolled in that chivalry whose Leader goes forth conquering and to conquer ; yield not a sigh to the vain contests of earth, lest looking back, thou stumble, and thy fall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth !’

He was roused from his meditations by cries of distress, faint yet distinct, proceeding from the recesses of the palace. A great sound of voices, within and without, followed, and unable to contain himself, Angelo rose and took his way towards the scene of action. He was accosted at the foot of the knoll by a wild Samian lad, evidently the guide promised by his deliverer ; the boy led him across the swamp, springing from tussock to tussock, till they reached the border of the moaning sea ; here they walked quickly along on the flat thin shingle peculiar to those tideless shores. The voices, as ‘ of those that shouted for mastery,’ grew louder, till they reached a little bay, and came suddenly on a dense and excited crowd. A boat manned by six rowers seemed about to push off from the shore ; it was laden with sacks and caskets ; a man whom the friar recognized as Gandolfo, lay ironed at the bottom of it. Messer Marino stood with one foot on the shore and one on the gunwale, haranguing the crowd. ‘ Thanks, good folk,’ he said, ‘ for your goodwill, and

for the ducal bonnet you fain would set upon my brows ; but, *bembè*, it would not fit them ! Sorry fellow as I am, I have yet wit enough to know myself a sorry fellow, and not covet high office. Now I am in haste to be gone, and I leave you with this counsel : when my father dies, (and die he will right soon,) send for my banished brother Agnolo from Damietta, and make him your Doge ; he is a wise lord, and a valiant, and under him you shall learn not to curse the name of Sanuto.'

The suggestion was received by the islanders with a hushed murmur of disappointment, for Marinaccio, worthless though he was, had acquired a hold on their affections simply from the absence of cruelty and avarice in his character. Presently, however, the attention of all was distracted by a wild wail proceeding from the subterranean way, which terminated here in a trap-door concealed amongst some ruins. The trap-door was lifted, and Tita appeared, clinging to Rosamond Fytton, and sobbing, as in the last extremity of grief and horror. Then followed Sir Richard, propping with his stalwart arm the form of the unhappy bailiff. Doggedly silent, as before the moment which had doomed him to perpetual blindness, Tito disdained to complain, yet his writhing limbs and hands clasped over the sightless eyes betrayed his fiery pain. At this terrible sight, there burst a wild cry from all the spectators, and the captain of the galleys, rushing forward with a fierce *oath*, was about to plunge into the dark vault as the

nearest way to Sanuto and to vengeance. But Sir Richard stopped him with a warning gesture ; 'Hold,' he said ; 'you would not kill a senseless man ? The Doge lies prostrate ; the falling sickness is on him, and he may never wake again ! leave him to the just award of Heaven, or at least set these innocent ones in safety before your thoughts turn to vengeance.'

He was obeyed ; the crowd, pacified by a promise from Peppo that Agnolo Sanuto should at once be apprised of these events, dispersed to their homes. Rosamond, tearing off bandages from her linen cloak, bound up Tito's hurts rapidly and skilfully. The fugitives then embarked without let or hindrance, and ere daybreak, had safely reached the coast of Asia Minor.

CHAPTER XII.

‘Poor heart ! come rest thee (would we plead), come rest thee in the calm !
And we would bathe your weary life with love’s immortal balm ;
The tremulous sweetness round your mouth should smile as once it smiled,
You great strong man, with woman soul, and heart of little child.’—*Ballad*.

THE panic which, as we have seen, pervaded the Saracen army after the discovery of Emad-edîn’s plot did not extend to their beleaguered brethren in Damietta. This intrepid garrison made a noble stand against foes without, and famine and pestilence within their walls. Their obstinate resistance upheld Meledîn’s cause till he was joined by his brother, the Soldan of Damascus. Emad-edîn was forthwith tried for his treachery, and we may infer that death or life-long durance was its just punishment, as from henceforward his name vanishes from the page of history. His confederate, Hossein Bey, more astute though not less guilty, contrived to evade the charges brought against him, and was at the end of six days reinstated in his master’s good graces. The detection of the Koord produced a salutary effect on all disaffected spirits in the camp. Subordination returned,

and with it courage, and before a month had elapsed the Moslem army had boldly taken up its position along-side of the Christian host, between the town and Lake Menzaleh.

Alas ! that we should have to record it ! a less unanimous spirit reigned among the followers of the Cross than amongst those of the crescent. Proof of this was given, when shortly after, a truce having been agreed upon, the Damascene Soldan sent an envoy to sound King John as to the possibility of peace. This emissary was empowered privately to offer the restoration of Jerusalem, of a large portion of Palestine, and of that long-contested fragment of the true cross which had remained in the hands of the infidels.

‘The English, French, and Italians,’ says Fuller,* ‘would have embraced the conditions, pleading that it was good wisdom to take so desperate a debt whensoever the payment was tendered.’ To this reasoning Cardinal Pelagio would by no means assent, ‘alleging,’ continues our historian, ‘that this voyage was undertaken not only for the recovery of Palestine, but for the extirpation of the Mahometan superstition ; herein no doubt following the instructions of his master (the Pope), whose end in this warre was, that this warre should have no end !’

Pelagio’s violent counsels won the day, unhappily. Keen was the disappointment and fierce the wrath of

* Historie of the Holie Warre, chap. xvii.

the Saracens when this decision of the Christians was made known against them. Kor-edin, Soldan of Damascus, swore in the first heat of his anger to beat down the walls of Jerusalem, and demolish all the fair buildings within them. Too well did he keep his vow, respecting only the tower of David and the temple of the Sepulchre. The dogs of war which had slumbered awhile, seemed about to wake with renewed fury, and the year 1218 bade fair to close on scenes of fresh strife and carnage.

There lay between the two armies encamped side by side on the left bank of the Nile, a strip of debateable ground. Here some daring traffickers adventured themselves and their goods in search of gain, and not a few persons of doubtful or desperate character lurked about, being prohibited entrance into both camps. Here, by a little spring of water half buried in reeds, Gawyne de Boteler had lingered ever since the detection of the Koordish conspiracy. The gratitude of Mel-edîn for his good service on that occasion, would fain have displayed itself by magnificent gifts, and by placing him on a footing equal to that of his own most distinguished Emirs. With delicacy of mind equal to that 'princely goodness' which the historian of the Holy Warre ascribes to him, Mel-edîn made these offers through the only channel which would render them acceptable, that of the page, best known as his 'Bulbul.' The boy was empowered to promise Gawyne lands in Syria, far away from the present scene of contest ;

his profession of Christianity should not be interfered with, nor any service exacted from him which the most scrupulous sense of honour could take objection to. The boy spared neither persuasions nor caresses to win De Boteler to accept these favours, and Gawyne's nature was so strongly moved both by the messenger and the message, that scarce could he find words wherewith to clothe his refusal. Had he not been bound by a definite vow to eschew wine-cup and feast, possessions and pleasures, until such time as the curse resting on his head should be removed, who knows but he might have departed from his integrity? For the foundations of that integrity had been sorely shaken of late; a message from John of Brienne, apprising him of, and warning him against, the persevering ill-will of Cardinal Pelagio, had filled him with bitterness; the spurs of knighthood and the glory of fighting for the Cross seemed now more than ever shut out from his reach; and religion herself had assumed to his eye a lowering aspect, since her chief minister had become his determined oppressor. Under this pressure the chivalrous sensitive spirit at times all but sank, and fits of terrible despair took possession of him, alternating with hours of dull listlessness. He would then have said in his haste 'all men are liars,' but for the pitying love of the Bulbul; care for the gentle boy, whose position was neither safe nor happy, roused him from the contemplation of his own griefs, and almost unconsciously he made it his aim to lead his

ductile mind to a love of truth, and to thoughts and aspirations unknown in that effeminate court.

It was a marvel to Gawwyne to note how readily these ideas found entrance into the Bulbul's mind. They seemed its natural and congenial food, while the corrupt maxims and the vices of the Caireen court, albeit he had grown up from childhood amongst them, appeared foreign to its innate nobleness. Surely, the 'honest and good heart' was there, and not only so, but at some very early period of the boy's life, it must have been sown with the right seed! The subject was wrapped in obscurity, and Gawwyne's inquiries into his origin only drew forth a few vague and mournful reminiscences, like fragments of a half-remembered dream. Indeed, whenever the boy set himself in earnest to conjure up memories of his childhood, his thoughts appeared to become confused; contradictory images floated before him, mountain peaks glittering with snow, then a battle, or it might be a siege, with 'blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke;' then a woman's arms struggling to retain him, and a woman's wail when he was torn away—and, through all, the sinister features of Hossein Bey, as of his evil genius.

The captain of the Mamelukes obstinately refused to throw any light on the subject; he sneered at the Bulbul's anxiety to learn his parentage, and once would have deprived him by force of the baldrick which alone could give him some clue to it. But *the boy* had resisted this aggression, and even taken

courage to complain of it to the Soldan. Mel-edîn had redressed the grievance in his own indolent fashion by a few words ; ‘Thou, Hossein, restore the bauble to my minstrel ; thou, child of mystery, take it and wear it if thou wilt, but let not thine eyes wax hollow with seeking whence it comes ; does the stream that wanders through fat valleys, murmur after the bleak crag which gave it birth ? does the swallow skimming over sunny plains, look back to the foggy lands where it was hatched ? Look thou to them, and be wise !’

Hossein’s hatred, sharpened by this incident, had been wrought up to its highest pitch, ever since the discovery of Emad-edîn’s plot had endeared the Bulbul yet more to his master. Every sort of indulgence was now heaped upon the boy, and he might have been debased for life had not his clinging fondness for De Boteler rescued him. They spent several hours together daily, the Bulbul acquiring much knowledge of Norman French, and of Frank arts and modes of warfare ; in return, he perfected Gawyne in the use of the djureed, and on clear wintry nights taught him the rudiments of astronomy. To his creed, if such it might be called, he seldom adverted ; it was not that of Mahommed, but a kind of natural religion, balancing between hope in an unseen Supreme Creator, and fear of the inferior but malevolent spirits to whom He was supposed to delegate the ordering of this lower world. It was evidently a cheerless belief, and the boy felt a craving

after something better. It chanced now and then, that the fresh but not frigid December wind blew from the direction of the Christian camp, and brought with it a faint sound of matin or vesper bell. Then Gawyne would prostrate himself on the sand, and cover his face with his hands rather in sadness than in prayer, and the boy would desist from his speech or song, and listen also ; but whatever questions might arise to his lips, remained unuttered, for on that subject alone, the banished man was stern and reserved.

One day the Bulbul had come to De Boteler in breathless gladness to tell him that he had obtained Mel-edîn's permission to accompany the envoy of Damascus to John of Brienne's head-quarters. Thus, for the first time, he would have the opportunity of beholding those redoubtable Crusaders whose exploits had taken strong hold of his imagination ; his eye, sated with the pomp of an Oriental camp, would be refreshed by the contrast of the free Northmen's bearing, he would note their weapons, their aspect, their demeanour ; strange as it might seem, his heart appeared actually to leap towards them as toward friends ! Gawyne put down, by one strong effort, the emotions which this announcement stirred in his breast. When asked by the boy urgently to make him the bearer of some errand in the Christian host whereby his present adverse fortunes might be mended, he replied in a low voice, ' Come again at sunset, and I will answer thee.' The gesture which

accompanied these words, showed his desire to be left alone, and the Bulbul comprehended it, and took flight at once, but returned punctually as the last ray of the setting sun sank beneath the African desert. De Boteler was sitting under the shelter of the tall brown reeds which trembled and crackled in the evening wind. His Arab horse, restored to him not many days before by his grateful friends the Copt-traders, stood quietly at his side. His hands were engaged in brightening up the rings of his hauberk ; a feverish gleam of re-awakened hope shot from his eye as the page silently greeted him, and stood awaiting his behest.

‘Young brother,’ he said, laying aside the hauberk and drawing the boy gently to him, ‘I have an errand for thee, one that imperils neither thy safety, nor thy fealty. Thy princely master has crowned his gifts to me with that of perfect freedom to return to my own warriors, if I will—and can. Of thy kindness then, seek out the tents of Randle, Earl of Chester ; three golden sheaves on a field of azure mark his pennon.’

‘I know, I know,’ interposed the boy ; ‘he is spoken of amongst our chiefs as a very doughty Emir of very little stature ; the “stunted palm-tree,” men call him !’

‘The same,’ replied De Boteler ; ‘this earl has in his train a knight, named Sir Richard Fytton, whom, if thou find, thou shalt serve me well.’ His voice grew thick and hoarse, and bending low, he busied

himself in detaching from within his vest a small oval picture. It was a very rude representation of the Virgin and Child ; on the back of it, which appeared to be of silver gilt, were engraved the three chalices of the De Botelers. ' Give this to Sir Richard,' he said.

' What manner of man is Sir Richard, and how shall I know him ?' inquired the Bulbul, gazing intently on the faded relic.

' He o'ertops his liege from the shoulders upward,' replied Gawyne ; ' his mien is stately yet mild ; his brow ample and furrowed ; his locks are thin and silver-tipped ; should he wear his helm, it bears the golden sheaf of the earldom ; so does his surcoat.'

' Enough ; I see him before me,' the boy made answer. ' Now, brother, put into my mouth the words which may best chain his ear.'

De Boteler mused awhile. ' They must be brief,' he said, ' Pray him of his courtesy to look on this picture ; he will remember it well ; say, as the hurt stag pants after the brook, so he who sends this pants to die amongst his own people ; inquire if there be no place in Earl Randle's camp for him, for rather would he hew wood and draw water in Christ's host, than reign in the palace of the unbeliever.'

The page pondered over these words as though he were committing them to memory. ' My voice shall be the echo of thy thought, brother,' he said at length ; ' the cliffs of Petra give not back more truly the shout of the Bedouin, than I will thy words.'

So they parted, and early on the morrow the Damascene envoy with his splendid train rode by, and was admitted into the crusading camp. Two days passed before the same procession returned at full speed, and De Boteler, whom the intervening time had almost stood still with, marked their excited bearing, and boded war from the shouts and fierce gestures with which they responded to their Moslem brethren's greetings. Hour after hour passed by, and twilight set in, finding him still alone, and in a state of suspense scarcely bearable to his fiery nature. He thought the certainty of evil would be a relief, yet did his heart sink within him when the Bulbul appeared with head depressed, and burning cheeks. He gave back the relic in silence, then took his seat on the ground as if waiting to be interrogated. There was a reverent observance in his air that showed him the unwilling bearer of ill tidings ; and his fleet foot had lingered on the way, as though loth they should be unfolded before day's garish eye.

A sign from De Boteler unlocked his speech. 'Brother,' he said, wringing his hands, 'I boasted great things, and have achieved nothing ; I thought to bring to thy parched lips the blood of the grape, and lo, the draught is wormwood, and thou wilt curse me !'

'Never !' answered Gawyne, in a hollow voice ; 'only speak quickly, and tell me every whit.'

'Long did I watch for a fitting time to perform thy bidding,' began the page. 'The Damascene

Emir would not trust me out of his sight, saying that I was a spoilt minion, and by rash prating might undo his work.'

''Twas roughly spoken,' observed Gawyne, noting an angry emphasis in his companion's voice. 'Yet the man was not wholly wrong, and showed himself herein a wary ambassador; speak on.'

'On the third day,' pursued the Bulbul, 'I saw for the first time your dwarfish captain; he had been sick, and is now scarcely healed, yet took he his seat in council, and spoke briefly, and all men gave him ear. I tracked him to his tent, and when about to enter, there was hailed by a young gentleman of your height, stately and scornful in mien; he was armed to the teeth, only his face uncovered; on his steel cap was set a lion.'

'The lion passant of the Fitzwarins,' thought Gawyne; 'Hugo himself, by my halidame; what said he, boy?'

'He asked whence I came, and whom I sought,' replied the page; 'and I made answer, "Sir Richard Fytton;" and he looked strangely on me, and said "What wouldest thou with Sir Richard?" and I answered sharply, "I tell that to none but himself." "Then go seek him in Paradise," quoth he, "for in this camp he is not, nor ever has been."'

'Oh! what meant he by that?' cried De Boteler, starting up.

'I think he meant but to provoke me, in his insolence,' replied the Bulbul. 'He spoke at random.

but seeing me persist, added more courteously, "On my faith, pretty boy, there is no Fytton amongst us, I would there were ; if no other knight can serve thy turn, go back whence thou camest." Then said I, "If you will, you may serve my turn, by bringing me before the face of your earl ; he that owns this picture has a boon to ask of him through me." Then I shewed the picture, and he started, and with stammering speech questioned me concerning thee. I urged him to procure me access to his lord, but this he flatly refused, and all I could obtain was that he himself would carry thy relic to the Earl. He tarried not long, and returned with a dark and troubled eye, and thrust the picture into my hand, muttering with averted face, "My liege knows not the man ; get thee back to him that sent thee." My blood waxed hot, and I cried, "Said thy liege indeed that, and no more ? then is the banished gentleman who sends me hither a more true gentleman than he." On this he of the lion-crest shook all over, and became scarlet with wrath or shame ; what the strife might have grown to I cannot tell, had not an officer of the Damascene ambassador found me out ; he, raging at me for a peevish boy, broke off our quarrel, and ever since his eye has been so vigilantly on me, that scarcely could I escape to tell thee these ill news to-night.'

Hot tears coursed one another down the boy's cheeks as he concluded this recital, and Gawyne, although oppressed by a sense of deeper hopeless-

ness than he had yet known, was not insensible to the distress of his zealous advocate. 'Cheer up, brother,' he said, 'the Soldan loves thee well, and will bear thee harmless through these turmoils, the offspring, as I guess, of paltry jealousy.'

'Ah,' sighed the Bulbul, 'that my princely master loves me is at once my joy and bane, the honey of my life, and its poison ! its honey, for is not love the sweetness of life ? its bane, inasmuch as it benumbs and cramps my soul, else craving after nobler things !

'Oh, brother, I was not born to kneel on silken cushions, twanging the girlish lute, or stringing pearls of Ormuzd for the favourite wife ! As a child, I had bright dreams of knighthood, of the glory of a constant will ; and lo, now, thou art come, the living image of these things, and how shall I part with thee ?'

'Yet part we must,' said De Boteler ; 'had I had aught to share with thee, home, hope, or kindred, it should not have been thus ; until this night I knew not my full and perfect beggary, nor felt half its sting.' He paused in uncontrollable anguish, but marking the page's quivering lip, quickly resumed his self-command, and went on : 'Yet grieve not thou, dear boy ! thou hast wrought a kindly deed in bearing me Earl Randle's message, for 'tis less irksome to know the worst than to fear it ! Now we must part ; go, go, and God be with thee !' But the Bulbul could not, would not, be thus shaken off ; he divined De Boteler's purpose, now fixed and

shaped, of quitting Egypt on the morrow, and though he honoured him for the resolution, yet with the waywardness of young affection, he strove hard to make him break it. A respite of a few hours was however all that he could gain, and to obtain this, he had recourse to an innocent artifice.

‘Hast thou forgot, brother,’ he asked, ‘that to-morrow is held the great passage-at-arms in presence of both Soldans? and that the “perfect king” vouchsafed to say he had heard of thy new skill in wielding the djureed, and desired to see it?’

De Boteler shook his head. ‘The perfect king,’ he said, ‘is surrounded by the flower of Georgia and Turkistan; it can but little pleasure him to see one nameless Frank enter the lists with that goodly band; I will not do so, not I.’

‘Then,’ persisted the Bulbul, with an air of pique half real, half assumed; ‘then art thou faithless to thy plighted word! Is not the first prize a fair apple of wrought gold in a network of silver? and didst thou not promise to do thy might to win the gaud, and give it me?’

‘Ay, ay, I remember now!’ answered Gawyne, in a tone of weary abstraction. ‘’Twas a promise, and shall be made good, so help me Saint Julian; now leave me, brother.’

The Bulbul slowly departed, chilled by those cold words, and the dreamy apathetic manner in which they were spoken. The bold English heart was left to

struggle with its misery alone, to struggle, to writhe, well nigh to break ! ‘ Is it come to this ? Does no man care for me ? No man, save one nameless page, and perhaps his royal master—they indeed speak me gently, and were peace to be found in gold and lands, in revels and sports, and in the smiles of dark-eyed slaves, peace were mine, for all these doth Mel-edîn give ! And, oh shame that so it should be ! there is a tempting voice at mine ear, there is a weak spot in this sore and bruised heart, that ever and anon inclines me to yield, to sink into these softnesses, to forget my own people and my father’s house ! O Mother, Mother, plead for thy son, that he sell not his faith as abhorred Judas did !’

He buried his face in his hands, and paced slowly up and down the level sward, till a far-off tremulous sound smote his ear. ‘ It is, it is the compline bell ! and this is Christmas-eve, and in merry England they kindle now the yule-log, and stir the wassail bowl, and lord and vassal pledge one another, and the serf drinks and remembers his yoke no more ! What brighter hearth once than ours in all the western marches ? I see them now, stalwart lads, blythe maidens, hale old men gathered in our Christmas hall. Carollers ranged aloft sing their winter-masse song of angels “talking so merrilie up i’ the sky.” My gentle mother is there and bids all welcome, and *she* my rose of beauty, walks beside her, ministering with coy gladness to babes and tottering age. O days gone by ! O roof-tree now charred and blackened

and mouldering on the ground, I dare not think of you ! That way madness lies !

He flung himself passionately on the ground, and lay there still and speechless ; the cool fragrant mould refreshed his temples, and calmed their throbbing, till at length all his tumultuous longings centred in one, even that he might lie thus on the breast of his mother earth, and die. Sleep, the mild image of death, came in answer to this longing, and so the dark spell passed away, and another sun arose, ushering in the hour that was to be the turning-point of Gawyne's life.

The passage-at-arms of which the Bulbul had spoken was a surprise planned by Mel-edîn for the entertainment of his more warlike brother, Kor-edîn of Damascus. In imitation perhaps of European jousts, a large flat space had been partitioned off, several tiers of seats erected round it, and prizes prepared for those who should distinguish themselves in the contest. Oriental usages forbidding that a 'Queen of Love and Beauty' should award the prizes, the Caireen Soldan had been persuaded to undertake that office, devolving, however, all that was onerous in it on his minister, Hossein Bey. Thus were the last hours of the truce to be spent, and very gorgeous did the pageant promise to be when the sun rose upon it round as a shield, and flashing bright but mild rays on every side. The robes and turbans of the spectators presented every variety of colour, from dazzling white or gold, to the subdued russets, and

crimsons of Oriental texture. The *élite* of the Soldan's harem, summoned by him from Cairo some weeks before, were permitted to be present. They occupied pavilions so draped as to shroud them from sight, yet enable them to watch the proceedings, which they did with no incurious eye. Magnificent canopies had been erected for the imperial brothers, but the hour appointed for the beginning of the sports had long past, and they remained still vacant.


At last a herald advanced, and announced it to be the will of the 'perfect king' that proceedings should commence without him. Hossein Bey, 'superbly mounted, stationed himself at the foot of the imperial canopy, thus signifying that the office of umpire was entrusted to him. It was observed that the captain of the Mamelukes looked deadly pale, and that this coveted distinction sat uneasily upon him. He gave the signal, however, and trumpets sounded, and a number of young men, all sons of Emirs or other persons of distinction, rushed into the arena. Contests of wrestling and fencing followed, and prizes were awarded to the victors. A pause ensued, and all eyes turned towards the imperial canopies, under which, an hour later, Mel-edin and his brother took their places, followed by an immense retinue of household and other officers. Hossein Bey remained immovable at his post, but though he did not turn his head, he contrived to roll his sinister eye towards *his master's* divan, and observed with silent rage, the

Bulbul stationed on Mel-edin's right. The boy's bright glance sought out De Boteler, and soon espied him standing unarmed, and clad in a loose surcoat, waiting for the contest of the djureed. True to his word, Gawyne was there, in bodily presence at least, but his thoughts were not with that glittering crowd, and he remained aloof from the throng of young warriors who like himself were waiting to play their part in the pageant. An exhibition of a very different description was to precede theirs. Two black men entered the arena, leading or rather dragging a captive lion brought from Nubia ; the kingly animal was let loose on a magnificent wild bull, and both fought long and savagely, and on more equal terms than could have been imagined. At length the royal beast was worsted, and a net was adroitly flung over the bull from behind, so as to restrain his fury while a keeper advanced and despatched the lion with a hatchet. According to Oriental custom, the bull was then permitted to slake his thirst in his victim's blood ; then fresh combats of the same nature followed, and for an hour or two, riveted the attention of the multitude. Gawyne became interested, and was eagerly watching the graceful cat-like movements of a young tiger, when his arm was lightly touched ; and the Bulbul's voice whispered in Norman-French, 'Hearken, brother ; I have somewhat to say to thee.'

A pang shot through Gawyne's heart ; was that to be their last interview ? Probably so ; for ere night he himself reckoned on being far away. The more

he looked into himself, the more he became sensible that Mel-edin's court, false, luxurious, cruel as it was, yet exercised a certain fascination over him. Mel-edin himself, generous and kind, but utterly and basely self-indulgent, had won the glowing gratitude of his desolate heart ; now that he had proved that gratitude by deeds, it was time he should be gone. Aimless and purposeless though he was in all other respects, the aim, the purpose to die an unstained warrior had not forsaken him quite.

The page drew Gawwyne away, for many curious eyes were turned upon them. He then hid his face on De Boteler's breast, murmuring, 'Take me with you, for I have now no other friend.' He could not for some time say more, or master the agitation which shook his frame ; at length, however, Gawwyne's inquiries drew from him the truth piecemeal. Hossein Bey, the arch-traitor, had woven meshes to entrap both him and his sovereign. A slight accident had revealed a cunning and all but successful plot against Mel-edin's life, and Hossein, its real framer, had endeavoured to throw the guilt on the Bulbul. 'Thou knowest, brother, that morning by morning Roshâneh, the Sultan's much-loved Arab mare, is brought to his pavilion to be by him caressed ; but first I, kneeling, offer to my lord his slight defection of dried fruits ; I did so this morn, while his Georgians adjusted his robes ; the wily fiend, Hossein, cringed at the tent-door, awaiting our *lord's* commands. Restrained by some kind power,



the "perfect king" refused the delicate cates I tendered to him ; I, fool that I was, knowing that he loves to be entreated, prayed him eat ; he smiled and said me nay, but added, " Here is Roshânah, she loves sweets, and has no cares of state to distemper her palate." So speaking in sportive guise, he took from me the crystal saucer, and offered its fragrant contents to the beautiful mare. Alas ! no sooner had her tongue touched them, than she trembled and became convulsed ; presently she sank down, stiffening in every limb, her throes the manifest work of poison. Some Mamelukes bore her away, and at a sign from Hossein Bey, others fell on me, and tore me from my master's feet. Mel-edîn spake nothing, seemingly cowed by the torrent of words from that false man, who vehemently accused me of the crime ! But an hour later his faithful Yusuf, (thou knowest him) came to Hossein Bey's tent where I lay bound, and set me free ! " Follow me," he whispered ; " a guard of Damascenes waits to escort thee to a place of safety, and here is gold for thy need." ' The boy's cheek glowed when he came to this part of his recital ; he paused, and fixed his speaking eyes on Gawyne, who signed to him to proceed. ' Yusuf,' he continued, ' showed as his warrant for setting me free, the Soldan's ring of grace ; but, brother, I could not accept as grace, the freedom that I had never forfeited by crime. " Either let me die," I cried, " or take me to my master that I may make mine innocence clear as noonday." Yusuf has ever hated the Mameluke

captain and loved me ; I think he inwardly rejoiced at this my resolution, the more because Hossein Bey manifestly quailed at it. He led me straightway to the footstool of the perfect king.'

Again the Bulbul paused, much affected. 'And thou couldst prove thine innocence, brother?' asked De Boteler.

'Oh, there was no need,' replied the page, eloquent tears running down his face ; 'when I would have spoken of that, my master laid his hand upon my lips, and said there was no need. But, alas ! he also said that I must go, that this court is now no place for me, that snares and deaths lurk on every side here. Most graciously did he add that my every need henceforward should be richly supplied, and that if I would, I might take service with the mighty Kor-edin, his brother.'

'And what saidst thou?' asked Gawyne, struck with the considerate kindness of Mel-edin towards his young favourite.

The boy answered sadly, 'Scarcely could I frame my words aright, for grief to think of leaving so good a lord ; and, oh, double grief that I must leave him in the nets of that dark fowler !'

'Despair not,' replied Gawyne, borrowing his consolation from the figurative language most familiar to the Bulbul. 'The fowler may be snared in his own net ; and if I err not, Prince Kor-edin hath fixed his keen eye on this plotter, and will lay his hand on him when his hour is come.'

Now tell me boy, what master thou dost choose to serve.'

'Since I must leave my own dear master,' replied the page, 'I will have none other but thee! O noble Frank, be my lord, my pattern, from this day forth: teach me to hate a lie, to help the weak, to bear patiently the buffets of evil fate; teach me'

His glowing entreaty was cut short by the approach of an officer of the Soldan. 'The sport of the djureed,' he said to De Boteler, 'is about to begin, and your presence, young Sir, is desired in the lists.'

Gawyne obeyed the summons, only tarrying to wring the page's hand, in token of acquiescence with his fervently expressed desire. The boy's affection was a cordial to his spirit, and as he entered the arena, the consciousness that he was neither unloved nor lonely, gave vigour to his step and brightness to his eye. He mounted the fleet horse which was in readiness, took the djureed allotted to him, and attached to his saddle a wand armed at one end with a crook, by which the djureed might be picked up without dismounting. He took his appointed place in a long line of fifty horsemen at one end of the arena. A party of equal numbers and strength were ranged exactly opposite to them. All the combatants were well-formed, strong, and graceful, full of fire and eagerness, and as impatient for the signal as the mettlesome but well-trained animals which they bestrode. Many curious and some unfriendly glances were turned by them upon the Frank stranger, whom

Mel-edin's express command had added to their numbers. His bright chesnut hair and pale complexion, might look girlish contrasted with their dark locks and skins, but in breadth of chest and development of muscle he excelled most of them, and the curling lip and deep blue pensive eye wore as resolved an expression as that of any swarthy warrior of the band.

It was beautiful to see twelve or fifteen horsemen detach themselves from the rest, and dash forward at full speed and in a compact body towards the centre of the arena. Here they were confronted by an equal number of the opposite party ; each let fly his dart, without relaxing his speed for a moment, then dexterously slipped under his horse for an instant to avoid the djureed of his adversary. Then, still at full gallop, the whole party wheeled round the course, each man recovering his dart as he passed, and all returning in compact order to the point from whence they started. There they paused to breathe and change horses, while a fresh relay took their place.

The sport continued for two hours, and ended by a general *mélée* in which many were unhorsed, and some few struck and disabled. A still greater number lost all chance of a prize from being unable to recover their djureeds without drawing rein. De Boteler had acquitted himself well, being a perfect horseman, and possessing a light firm hand, and unerring eye. He had equalled his competitors in skill, and surpassed most of them in courtesy, not from risking his own success in order to pick up

and restore the dart of some less practised rider. These traits procured him favour among the spectators, and perhaps a warmer admiration from the caged inmates of Mel-edîn's harem, than the lord of the East would altogether have approved of. The tilt ended, De Boteler and eleven others, were pronounced victors, and as such commanded to approach the imperial canopy.

A flourish of music announced that the prizes were to be awarded ; Mel-edîn, urged by his politic brother to court popularity, advanced to the front of his divan ; leaning on a pile of golden cushions, he pointed out to his minister, each successful candidate, and the costly toy or gem assigned to him ; these Hossein Bey delivered ; each warrior prostrated himself on the earth before the king of the universe, and then retired to a distance of several yards from the royal canopy.

Not till this moment had the thought flashed on Gawayne's preoccupied mind, that in humouring the Bulbul's fancy he had placed himself in a position scarcely worthy of a Christian warrior. He looked quickly around, prompted by the free spirit within him to retreat at once from the circle, but it was too late ; a chamberlain summoned him to Mel-edîn's footstool, and an imploring gesture from the page beckoned him on. The exquisitely worked trinket was placed in his reluctant hand by Hossein Bey, and with a scowl that official bade him 'fall low on his knees before the chosen Sword of Mahomet,

and Monarch of monarchs.' All Gawyne's blood seemed to rush to his temples at this command ; he cast one glance of scorn on the villain who uttered it, then turning towards the Soldan, bowed his head low, and slightly bent one knee before him. Hossein Bey officiously came forward, and would have enforced a more abject homage ; but the Soldan forbade him, saying in his full melodious tones, ' It is enough, O Hossein ; the golden-haired Frank hath done well, let him go in peace.'

De Boteler, thus honourably dismissed, again bent his head low, and fell back some paces. During his brief interview with the Soldan, two individuals had been added to the group standing in the arena. They were men coarsely habited in dark serge, barefooted, and girded with girdles of rope. A guard of Saracens walked behind and on either side of them, but no guard was needed, for the prisoners were completely defenceless, and both advanced, with folded arms, and meek steadfast look. As they passed by Gawyne, the younger and slighter of the two friars slowly turned, and, with a thrill indescribable, De Boteler met the severe and searching glance of Francis of Assisi.

During the four months of his abode in the Christian camp, the Umbrian had silently cherished his project of seeking an interview with the Soldan of Egypt. One brother only of the Order shared his confidence, and prayed as the highest boon to *share* his perils also. To convert the 'sword of

Mahomet' to Christianity, or to obtain at his hand the palm branch of martyrdom, were the objects of their ambition ; but their obedience to the Church had hitherto put an obstacle in the way of this noble design. ' Whosoever among the brethren' (thus had Francis proclaimed from the altar, in his native Assisi); ' Whosoever among the brethren shall desire to go among the Saracens, or other infidels, shall without fail ask leave of his superior. The superior to whom Francis was bound by this rule to submit, was Cardinal Pelagio ; to him therefore he and his companion applied for leave to visit the Saracen host ; 'et mult l'en prièrent,' adds the chronicler. Their solicitations were for a long time vain ; at last weary of their ' continual coming,' Pelagio granted them a reluctant and half-contemptuous permission.

Short preparation did these unworldly men need for their undertaking ; on the morning of Mel-edîn's passage-at-arms, they reached the Saracen out-posts, and freely gave themselves up to the first soldier whom they encountered. A gold besant was the price set on the head of every Christian ; their captor therefore joyfully secured them, and doubting (says the annalist) whether they came '*en message, ou por eus renier*,'* carried them off to the royal head-quar-

* ' With a message, or with the intention of recanting.' The interview here recorded between Mel-edîn and the Franciscans, and St. Francis's bold challenge of the Imaums, are taken almost verbatim from the chronicles of William of Tyre, and other cotemporary writers.

ters ; there he claimed his reward, and they meanwhile poured forth their urgent intreaties for an interview with the Soldan. Mel-edîn's curiosity was awakened, perhaps a better feeling was roused within him, for his heart secretly inclined toward the Christians. He at once granted the desired interview ; the friars were, as we have seen, led into his presence, "and when they came before the Soldan, they saluted him, and he saluted them again." Prince Mel-edîn, like many indolent persons, was a physiognomist, and rarely deceived in the conclusions he drew from men's faces and gestures. If he tolerated villains and hypocrites in his household, it was for want of energy to dismiss, not of perception to discern them. He bestowed only a passing glance on the older friar, but his regards were riveted by the pallid and speaking countenance of Francis, and to him he addressed himself, bidding him draw near his footstool.

'What brings thee hither, stranger ?' inquired the Soldan, courteously. 'Come ye, thou and thy brother, as heralds from your king ? or would you renounce your errors, and become true Saracens ?'

'Saracens we can never be ! replied the Minorite, in the Oriental dialect then in use. 'Heralds we are from the king, yea, from the King of kings, sent to show thee, O Mel-edîn, the way of salvation—only do thou hearken and believe.'

The Soldan of Damascus now interposed. 'Brother,' he said, abruptly rising, 'the sun is high in

heaven, and the sports are broken up ; I pray your leave to depart to mine own pavilion, having little time and less desire to dally with this mad fellow.'

So spoke Kor-edîn, who inwardly despised his brother's dreamy and speculative turn of mind. Mel-edîn breathed more freely when he was gone, and turning to a chamberlain, bade him summon his chief Imaums. 'Yonder golden-haired Frank,' pursued the monarch, languidly pointing towards De Boteler, 'shall be our interpreter, if any be needed.'

'Not so, O King,' said the friar, sternly regarding Gawyne ; 'he who is found in the tents of ungodliness, is not worthy to utter the words of life. I say of life,' he continued, exalting his voice, and stretching forth his right hand, 'for know, O King, that all else is death ; except thou and thy people hearken to us, yea rather to God speaking by our lips, ye shall all surely die.'

He paused, and the clarion-like voice changed in an instant to accents of persuasive sweetness. 'If ye will hearken,' he proceeded, 'we, simple men though we are, will show you, in God's name, the good and the right way ; yea, the wisest and most subtle of your learned clerks shall own that God is with us of a truth.'

The Soldan, perplexed yet fascinated by the speaker's fervour, made answer, 'We have sent for our learned doctors and expounders of the law ; by their counsel will we abide in this matter.'

A body of green-robed Imaums now appeared, and at a signal from Mel-edîn, ranged themselves before him. 'And when they were come,' writes the chronicler, 'the Soldan himself told them wherefore he had caused them to be fetched, and he rehearsed to them all the words of the friar, requiring to know what they thought of the same. "Sire," they answered, "thou art the sword of the law ; to thee it appertains to maintain and guard it ; we charge thee, therefore, in the prophet's name, that thou cause these men's heads to be cut off."' '

The Soldan was sorely perplexed, for his Imaums pressed him loudly and vehemently to give sentence of death against the intruders, and a rising murmur from the multitude seemed to ratify this bloody doom. Francis clasped his hands, and looked fervently, joyously, up to the blue heaven. De Boteler instinctively felt for his sword-hilt, then remembering that he was weaponless, let his arms drop by his side in the attitude of hopeless dejection.

Then Francis spoke again ; 'Lord Mel-edîn, to thee and to thy people we are come ; even to unfold unto you the boundless grace of Christ, our Lord God ; if thou still doubt our sincerity kindle a furnace on this spot, and make the pile broad and high ; I and your priests will enter it together, and the Lord shall show who is on the right side, and who are his.'

There was a blank and awe-struck silence through the assembly at these words ; the ordeal by fire, a

mode of trial familiar to the European mind, was a new and startling idea to that of the Moslem, yet, wild as the suggestion seemed, it came from the lips of Francis with the weight and authority of a heaven-sent message ; the wasted form, lustrous eye and impassioned fervour of the speaker, struck a chord in all hearts, nor is it improbable that the Oriental reverence for those who are thought to border on insanity was also enlisted on his side.

Be this as it may, the popular feeling became at once favourable towards the bold Friar, and found vent in a murmur of assent to his proposal. The Soldan, who secretly despised yet feared his Imaums, remained silent and wavering. The Imaums themselves began to quail as they saw the aspect of things grow unfavourable to their cause ; they gathered together in a knot, and after a few moments' whispered consultation, made their obeisance to the Soldan, and, says an eye-witness, 'shuddering, withdrew.' The undaunted Francis and his brother were left masters of the arena.

'My Imaums love not such doctrine as thine, O stranger,' observed the prince, with a touch of satire in his melodious voice ; 'I know not one amongst them who would willingly forestal, by an hour, his admission to Paradise.'

The Minorite made no reply ; his attention was fixed on the retreating Imaums, and as he saw them one by one slink away veiling their faces with an affectation of offended sanctity, a keen sense of the

ludicrous for a moment overcame him. A smile of intense amusement played round the corners of his mouth, and glittered in his eye, but it vanished like summer lightning, and he looked down on the ground, sighing heavily.

‘Lord Mel-edîn,’ he resumed, after a pause, ‘only promise on the word of a king that thou wilt give the Gospel of Christ a patient hearing, and I myself will enter the furnace alone ; if the flame hurt me not, then shall ye know, thou and thy people, that I have not spoken of myself, but that the Lord Christ hath sent me ; if I should perish, deem not therefore my message false ; deem rather that he who bears it, being unworthy of so high grace, is thus punished for his many and manifold sins.’

While the Minorite was yet speaking, a confidential servant of Prince Kor-edîn appeared, and was with the usual ceremony admitted to the canopy of the Egyptian monarch. He delivered his message to the ear of Mel-edîn alone ; its purport was as follows : — ‘The ashes of revolt are smouldering ; beware lest thine Imaums, seeing thine ear inclined towards these infidel Santons, re-kindle the flame ; see to it, ere mischief befall thee.’

The Soldan was visibly agitated by this warning ; he at once, by a signal to his chamberlain, broke up the assembly : a household officer was despatched to convene the offended priests in his pavilion ; another was bidden to provide an escort for the Franciscans, and see them safely conducted beyond the Saracen

lines within the hour. He then rose, and addressed the strangers in these remarkable words : ‘Sirs, these men have commanded me by Mahomet and by the law, to cause your heads to be cut off ; but I am minded to break that law ; for in keeping it, I should render you an evil reward for the peril you have adventured yourselves into to save my soul ; if you will abide with me, I will endow you with broad lands and great possessions, and ye shall be much accounted of amongst my wise men.’

The prince would have added more, but both brethren interrupted him with so firm and abhorrent a refusal of his magnificent offers, that he saw it was vain to repeat them. Still his generous spirit yearned to bestow upon them some tokens of royal bounty, and, continues the chronicler, ‘He caused gold and silver, and silks, to be brought before them, bidding them take as much as they would.’

The Minorites again refused his proffers, but more gently. ‘We will have nothing of thee, if we may not have thy soul,’ said Francis, much moved ; ‘dearer to us the bringing of thy soul to God, than all the kingdoms and all the treasures thou art worth.’

Exhausted by the toils and anxieties of the morning, and not unwilling perhaps to show confidence in their generous foe, the Franciscans prayed Mel-edîn to permit them to break their fast before departing.

“The Soldan,” we are told, “caused plenty of meat and drink to be set before them, and when

they had eaten they took leave of him, and he caused them to be escorted to the Christian camp."

When the multitudes assembled that morning in the arena were commanded to disperse, De Boteler seeing many eyes fastened upon him, hastened back in anguish of spirit to his own quarters. Eager to quit a spot where griefs and humiliations had crowded so thickly about him, he proceeded to saddle his fleet Arab, and prepare for instant departure. Soon all was in readiness, and he had only to wait the Bulbul's appearance. He found, however, that inaction, even for half-an-hour, was more than his spirit could bear. Past and future seemed alike fraught with bitterness ; and now, oh now, his cup had been filled to the brim—that awful saintly face which had haunted his dreams, those eyes which he had seen beaming with love to others, had been turned upon him, had sought him but to condemn ! The remembrance was agony, and as we have already said his wont was when 'pressed out of measure,' Gawyne cast himself down on the breast of his mother earth, and wept his fill.

From this ecstasy of sorrow, he was roused by steps drawing near, and by the touch of a firm hand laid upon his shoulder. Half ashamed and half angry at being detected in his womanish mood, he looked quickly up, dashing away the tears that trembled on his eyelashes. Oh ! strange surprise, sight of awe, yet of gladness ! the Minorite stood by his side, regarding him with looks of grave compassion !

Gawyne's heart waxed womanish now, for it beat so thick that he could not frame a word ; he could only look fixedly into that seraphic countenance, and gather comfort, mixed with awe, from its every line. It was the Franciscan who first broke silence. 'Thou art found,' he said, clasping his hands in thankfulness ; 'doubly found, O my brother, since now I know that the waste howling wilderness, not the palace of Islam, is thy chosen abode. Yes, I know, I know all,' he repeated, pointing to the page, who with Francesco's companion lingered in the background, 'and I bless God whose grace hath kept thee pure in the pit of corruption.'

'Indeed, father,' replied De Boteler, recovering some degree of calmness, 'I have in many things been much to blame, and for my long tarrying in this infected place, I deserve the stern brow you even now bent upon me ; but 'tis my fixed purpose to tarry here no longer ; this night by heaven's grace, shall see me far on my way.'

'Whither ?' inquired Francis, moved by the mournful quietness of his tone.

'I know not—God knows,' replied De Boteler, turning abruptly away. Pride ruled his will one moment, the next he turned back again, drawn by the irresistible attraction of those loving thoughtful eyes. 'If I abide here at Damietta, the Christian host will none of me ; if I should return to my native Cheshire, my kinsfolk and acquaintance will put me away ; what choice then remains ?'

The friar pondered for a few moments ; then sitting down by Gawyne, he said softly, ‘In truth, the hand of God is heavy upon thee, young brother ; nevertheless, hope in Him still and keep His way : it shall be for thy welfare in the end, yea, and in this thy present strait also ! Give me thy hand, brother,’ he proceeded : ‘I too have keen-edged sorrows thou knowest not of. When yonder golden sun rose, my hopes were bright and glowing as his orb ; I fondly deemed the conversion of Egypt and her blinded Soldan near at hand, deemed too that God had chosen me to be the poor but honoured instrument of His will. It hath proved far otherwise ; we have wrought no deliverance on the earth, neither has the world of Islam fallen ; God’s will be done ; His work be wrought by some worthier hand.’

De Boteler did not speak, but his countenance expressed the reverent sympathy with which his heart was filled. It was indescribably soothing to him to be called upon once more to bear a part in the sorrows of others.

‘Yet seven days,’ pursued Francis, ‘and I quit, God speeding me, these shores, and sail for my loved Italy ; the intervening holy season it is my purpose to spend in the desert, in earnest communing with my own heart, and with the all-merciful Master whom I serve. If thou, brother, dost not shrink from sharing with me this discipline, gladly, oh how gladly, would I crave thy companionship—but ponder well ere thou say yea—the work of healing is a

searching work, and He, the Divine Healer, spares not the probe at first ; and therefore, all save a very few, shrink from it . . . bethink thee.'

De Boteler's mind was made up ; here was the very medicine that his bruised heart needed, the rest, the refuge for which he had panted ever since the dark hour of his madness and crime. One difficulty only remained to disturb him—where should the Bulbul find a home during his brief absence ? The Minorite guessed his perplexity, by following the direction of his eye. 'Fear nothing for the lad,' he said : 'he shall remain with brother Morico, who is kind and true-hearted, and blythe withal as bird on bough ; see, they are knit together in friendship already ; thou, my son, come with me !' Overcome with love and gratitude, the forlorn wanderer flung himself at Francesco's feet, and would have kissed the hem of his garment ; but the Minorite extricated himself from his hold, and raised him from the ground. 'See thou do it not,' he said almost sternly ; 'I am thy fellow-servant and of them that keep the sayings of Christ ; worship Him.'

CHAPTER XIII.

‘Era gia l’ora che volge ’l disio
Ai naviganti, e intenerisce ’l core
Lo dì c’han detto ai dolci amici “a Dio.”’

Dante.

It was the afternoon of the last day of the year ; a shower of soft clear sunlight fell on the flat Egyptian shore, and on the thick waters of the Eastern Nile, here mingling and losing themselves in those of the Mediterranean. The place was quiet and solitary, being some miles north-east of the position of the Christian camp. Two persons only were to be seen, advancing slowly, and conversing in under-tones. Sometimes they paused, and looked seawards. A few small vessels only might be seen on the horizon. No sound was to be heard, except the cry of the sea-bird, and the musical plash of small waves. These seemed to utter a soft measured chime, the knell of the departing year.

In this retired spot, Francis of Assisi awaited the return of his brother Minorite and the appearance of the boat which was to bear them that evening to a Genoese galley. Knowing himself an object of bitter jealousy to Cardinal Pelagio, and of enthu-

siastic love among the rude soldiery, he with the true wisdom of humility had abstained from re-entering the camp. Brother Morico had been deputed to render an account of their glorious though seemingly fruitless enterprise to the legate. This done, he had promised to rejoin his superior, and the two were to return to their native Umbria together.

De Boteler could not look forward without a pang to parting with this heaven-sent friend. He felt, one might think, something of the blank and sadness which must have fallen on Herod's captive of old, when the angel who had filled his dungeon with brightness, and caused the iron gates to open before him, vanished away, and he was once more alone on the 'world's highway.' But Gawyne was no longer aimless. The Minorite had not enthralled his conscience, but set it free, not led him to lean on human aid, but pointed him, where his own eagle gaze ever delighted to rest, to the Fountain of Love and Light. The self-abhorring thrill with which Gawyne's ingenuous spirit viewed and magnified its own errors, was not suffered to unnerve him, but turned into a fresh motive for endurance and manly resolve. If Francesco's deep, perhaps over-strained, submission to authority, would not suffer him to blame the harshness which had blighted Gawyne's career, neither would his sense of justice permit him to take pattern by it. He met De Boteler's confessions with yearning tenderness, his flashes of scorn and

resentment against his persecutors with forbearance, his moods of despair with divine words of hope. Thus Gawwyne's breast was calmed and cleansed, and a trust sprang up within it that even should man persist in rejecting him from the ranks of chivalry, the true 'chivalrie of the Crosse' was yet within his reach.

Hitherto Francesco had seen fit to abstain from all topics of earthly concernment. He had feared to mar the work of penitence by too soon rekindling a hope of restoration to the Church's favour. On the other hand, he had shrunk from communicating tidings of crushing sorrow while the bruised heart was unfitted to bear them. For there is no need to tell, that he had at the first glance recognized in Gawwyne the 'Tristan' of Rosamond's artless story. Ever since that hour spent with her by Ivo's sick-bed, it had been added to the long list of his special requests to the court of Heaven that Tristan's soul might be given him 'for a prey.' He had made the petition in absolute undoubting faith that it would be granted, such a faith as a little child feels when it asks a boon of its father; now the boon was given, and Francesco felt no wonder at the strange circumstances which had wrought it out, only adoring thankfulness that thus it should be. The same fervent trust supported him in looking to the future, and he could leave Gawwyne's dark and uncertain lot to the ordering of God without a misgiving. As the hour of parting drew near, however, the warm human

affections welled up in his heart, and made utterance difficult. He stopped short on the sea-sand, and looked earnestly at his new disciple.

‘My more than father,’ said De Boteler, taking the Minorite’s hand, ‘scarce can these lips frame the word farewell ; yet (deem it not thanklessness) my heart feels strong, and sits more lightly on its throne than it hath done for many a month.

‘It is well, my son,’ replied Francesco ; ‘and truly thou hast cause for gladness ; is it small grace granted thee by high God that him thou callest ‘the Bulbul,’ a boy of such fair promise and teachable heart, should be committed to thy charge ?’

‘I never feel myself so unworthy,’ answered De Boteler thoughtfully, ‘as when I muse on him, and on the link of strong unbidden love which chains him to my outcast fortunes ; kind father, intercede for us, that he may learn, and I duly teach, all knightly Christian lore.’

‘Doubt not Heaven’s help in this,’ said the Minorite ; ‘distrust is like the hidden asp whose poison freezes the blood ; the boy, if I err not, is of princely temper, and has the seal of Christ on his heart, if not on his brow ; lead thou him on by pure example, and daily rehearsing of Creed and Christ’s own prayer.’

Gawyne silently bowed his head in reply, and a pause ensued. Then De Boteler said, ‘It will be my joy, father, to work out these holy counsels. At sunrise to-morrow, my Bulbul and I, with safe con-

duct from both Soldans, set forth toward Jerusalem. We will tarry a while at Catherine's convent on Sinai, and by the manger-bed of Bethlehem. Together we will draw nigh the town where Christ was sold and bought. Oh, father, thou didst speak even now of high grace conferred on me ! Is it not of this that I, unworthy, am bidden draw near the Heart of the World, the glorious land which kings and prelates vainly desire to see ? Would God thou, father, mightest tread the hallowed ground also ! but the wish is idle. Scarcely will Kor-edîn, in his great wrath against Christendom, suffer even me to pass unhurt ; and on thee I saw his eye roll angrily while thou didst confer with the gentle Mel-edîn !

Gawyne knew not how deep an echo his wish woke in the friar's breast. To tread 'the holy fields,'

' Over whose acres walked those blessed Feet
The which, twelve hundred years ago, were nailed
For our advantage to the bitter Cross,'

had been the most ardent desire of Francesco's ardent soul ; but like every other which bore reference to self, it had been laid on the altar of sacrifice. Now he could quietly reply, 'Thou shalt scarce need mortal companionship in that blest sanctuary, young brother. Of thy charity, when prostrate at that shrine, think on me.'

De Boteler wrung his hand in true English fashion, then hastened to resume his subject. 'From Jerusalem I scarcely know whither we should wend our way. The Hospitalers of Acre perchance might

open their doors to me ; and assuredly should my Bulbul incline to Christian lore, they will bid him glad welcome, and train him up nobly. Nor will he be a burden on their house, for his master has enriched him with such gold and gems as were no mean king's ransom.'

'Thy thought is wise,' said the Minorite ; 'no meeter refuge than the convent of the Hospitalers, nor meeter guardian than its Grand Master could be found for that gently nursed stripling ; and for thee, my son ?'

'I may perhaps seek service under those knights,' replied Gawyne. 'My birth is such as even they could not except against, and no office they can put upon me, however menial, will I refuse. Should they say me nay, father, wilt thou, wilt thou open thine arms to one spurned by all ?'

Francesco made no reply, and Gawyne feared he had asked amiss. Perhaps his petition was such as no true son of the Church could grant ? perhaps (and this seemed the more probable surmise) the Minorite doubted the truth, the depth of his penitence ? Something of the former anguish rushed over his soul, as he stood waiting his answer.

Still it came not, and in suppressed accents, in which entreaty was mingled with a touch of haughtiness, Gawyne continued, 'I refuse no pain, nor toil, nor shame, none ! only, father, let me no longer be cut off from all good men's fellowship ;

this is all I ask ; bind me by what vows you will, so you disown me not.'

'Tristan,' said the Minorite ; it was the first time that he had addressed his disciple by that name, and Gawyne started, 'Tristan,' he repeated, lifting one hand warningly, 'Let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. The vows thou dost now offer to Him, are they not already pledged to His creature ?'

De Boteler was in turn silent from excess of agitation, but his honest eyes shunned not the searching glance of the Franciscan ; their first expression was troubled and reproachful, but presently a flash of joy shot from them, and he said, 'It is true, father ; in happier days God gave me to know and love one—of all His creatures, fairest and best ; in His presence we plighted our troth ; my heart beats true to her, and ever shall do so, though in this great crash and ruin of my hopes, she is lost to me. Lost, lost !' he repeated, striking his forehead with his clenched hand ; 'say, father, must I not deem her for ever lost to me ?'

Francesco thought of the storm, the spedal ship, the more than probability that the waves had claimed Rosamond for their prey, and for a moment strong sympathy unmanned him ; Gawyne at that sight became as gentle as a child.

'You weep, Friar ; and as I think, for me ; yet speak the truth and spare not, for blackest tidings

come mended from thy lips ; is it not so ? She never can be mine ?

‘Whom God hath joined *man* may not sunder,’ answered Francesco solemnly. ‘But, brother, He who gave takes away whensoever He lists ; and what are we that we should complain ? Now summon thy scattered thoughts, be strong, and hearken unto me.’ Thus speaking, he led the way to a sand heap near, and bade Gawyne sit down by him. Then without preamble, or one needless word, he told him of the visit of the Knight of Fytton and his daughter to the spedal ship, its disappearance, and the uncertainty which hung over the fate of those on board ; he neither raised false hopes, nor quenched such as might reasonably be cherished ; he spoke low, and with the calm brevity of deep compassion.

De Boteler listened, pale and breathless ; it seemed as if the heart within him had turned to stone, and when the narrative was done he could not move, nor utter anything but the broken cry, ‘Gone, gone ! my own ! my darling ! yet not mine.’

‘Thine for ever,’ replied Francesco, ‘whether she breathe in earth’s prison-house or shine in a brighter sphere. These are no random words of comfort, brother,’ he continued, noting on Gawyne’s bloodless features the incredulity of despair. ‘I myself heard her lips avouch unchanged truth toward thee, unchanged trust in thy truth ; now dost thou believe ?’

‘*Thou* heardest? *thou* wast there?’ asked De Boteler, amazed. Had the speaker been another, how sorely would we have grudged him that ineffable happiness, the last glimpse of Rosamond, but such thoughts could have no place towards Francis of Assisi. The pale ascetic bore in his mien, furrowed and wasted by vigil and premature disease, an unearthly spell which stilled all wayward passion. He spoke again, returning to the history of the wreck, and breaking through that deep habitual reserve which ever kept him silent as to all that regarded himself; he alluded to Fra Angelo, the ‘brother whom he loved as his own soul;’ he described Ivo, in few but vivid touches, which set the uncouth lad before Gawyne’s mental eye at once. And Rosamond! never did painter from Francesco’s own sunny land, the home of genius, pourtray saint or martyr in colours so tender and true as Francesco now did the plighted wife of Gawyne; and as we gaze on the picture of our loved and lost till we think they are with us once more, so Gawyne hung on the Minorite’s words, and asked to hear them again and again. Then Francesco, as his wont was, led his scholar’s thoughts by little and little upward, till the ‘mourning fancies wild,’ and the selfishness which clings to earthly love, were purified and refined and brightened with hues of heaven.

It seemed, at first, as though De Boteler were incapable of admitting a hope that the Fyttons might yet live; nor did Francesco press that thought

upon his notice, rightly judging that it would of itself spring up as soon as his mind should have recovered its balance. So it proved, for after a long mournful musing, Gawwyne raised his head, and asked abruptly, 'Was no strange vessel in sight when this great ruin fell upon you?'

'At sunset,' replied the friar, 'I had noted a little ship, of Greek build, tossing on the rough waters north-east of our fleet; I watched her course from time to time, until she melted away in twilight.'

A gleam of troubled hope lit up Gawwyne's face. 'I will go search through the world!' he said, springing up. 'In the camp, perhaps'

Francesco shook his head. 'In the camp,' he answered, 'nothing is known concerning them. At Acre, we have set a trusty brother of the order, to inquire from every ship, tidings of our beloved Angelo; he will very gladly help thee in thy search.'

'Thanks, comfortable Friar,' replied De Boteler; 'I will seek him out; but say, by what token shall an alien from Holy Church find acceptance with him?'

'By the token of our order,' said the Minorite, authoritatively; 'it is the straitest rule, the very life of our brotherhood, to "cast no man out," to "speak to the sinner in meekness, not in wrath, lest he be driven to despair." Our Bernardino has learnt this rule full well.'

They relapsed into silence; the friar, pacing to and fro, recited his evensong; Gawwyne, with tearless

eye and folded arms, looked towards the heaving sea. An hour ago it had refreshed his spirit with its many twinkling smile, and the play of its waves crested with snowy foam. Now it seemed to him dark and leaden, the grave of his buried affections ; and its ceaseless moan rang dirge-like in his ear. Yet he could not tear himself away, and twilight stole over sky and earth, and found him rooted there. Francesco remained aloof, wrapt in contemplation, and unwilling also to break in on the musings of his companion.

They were deeply mournful, but no longer desponding. Francesco's hand, directed from above, had rent the veil which shut out heaven's light and grace ; the same hand had removed the barrier of man's creating, betwixt him and his ' dear and only love.' The anguish of believing her lost was rendered less intolerable by the certainty that she had loved, trusted him to the last. Her pale face now rose before him, not reproachful or in scorn, as imagination had too often pictured it, but tender, frank, confiding, as of yore. Nerved by the ever-present remembrance of her faith and truth, what could he not do and suffer ? ' She had not scorned him, could he scorn himself ?' No. Might the ranks of chivalrie but open to him once more, (and oh that they would, and that right soon !) he should not be found wanting. Her stainless rose should be his badge ; her stainless memory his lodestar till death !

So dreamed Gawyne, high aspirations alternating in his mind with bursts of utter sorrow. Thus absorbed, he knew not that Brother Morico and his young charge had drawn near, until he suddenly felt the boy's arms twined round his neck. There was deep comfort, in the long embrace and unspoken sympathy ; and there was strength too. His Bulbul must not learn softness or weakness from him ; he would master his grief, and rise and be doing at once for the boy's sake.

He found Fra Morico already deep in a narrative of stirring events, to which his superior listened with grave attention. The truce over, Kor-edîn had lost no time in carrying war into the camp of the Christians. They, scarcely prepared for movements so unwontedly vigorous had suffered a defeat ; many brave knights had been killed, and some few taken prisoners ; the battle had raged all day. The next morning, King John had collected his warriors, attacked the Saracens, and put them to the rout. 'Hundreds of the miscreants,' continued Morico, 'were miserably driven into the Nile, and there perished ; but alas ! neither good nor ill success can teach wisdom to our brethren in the camp ; their bickerings are fiercer than ever, horsemen contending with footmen, and footmen with horse which shall be accounted greatest ! and the infidel wags his head, and hisses at our dishonour !'

A hectic glow tinged Francesco's hollow cheeks as he hearkened to these details. His soul was

weary of his life by reason of these scandals among his brethren ; in vain during four months had he preached peace, exhorted, entreated, thundered by turns. They had listened to his voice as to a very lovely instrument, but they had not obeyed it ; the wolf of his native Appennines which crouched at his feet, and followed him like a house-dog, was less intractable than they.

Such were the griefs which devoured Francesco in secret. In public, he was always bright, fervent, animated, often mirthful, and exciting others to mirth ; but when alone he gave way to constitutional sadness. ‘The indulgence of grief’ says his biographer, ‘was his only self-indulgence ; thereby he shortened life, and almost wept himself blind.’

Brother Morico, a simple and unobservant man, pursued his unwelcome theme with little perception of its effect on an over-sensitive mind. Neither, till Francis touched his arm, did he observe the Bulbul, who had been chasing sea-fowl with boyish glee, draw near and assume an attitude of attention. The thoughts which perplexed the boy’s fancy were traced so clearly on his face, that no sagacity was needed to read them. ‘These dauntless Northmen !’ he was ready to exclaim ; ‘how leaps my heart to hear of their exploits ! Dearer to me their hard couch, shirt of iron, and rude fare, than the soft raiment of the Moslem ! And that strange awful sign for which they fight, how does it rivet eye and *heart* ! Methinks were I one of them, I could not

turn away from that to wrangle for mine own private ends ! Would I were a prince, or the son of a prince among them, that I might raise my voice and shame them out of these discords !'

Francesco, we have said, touched his brother's arm ; 'Cease, Morico,' so he commanded ; 'lest we offend this little one ! See, the sun's parting ray is quenched ! the octave of blessed Christmas morn draws near ! let our voices no longer proclaim the folly of man, but hymn the praises of the Virgin-born, Emanuel, God with us !'

'Emanuel !' repeated the Bulbul slowly to himself. 'Manuel ! he said again, turning his perplexed eyes on De Boteler ; 'what means that word ? oh, I have heard the sound of it before ! oh, it rings in mine ear most familiarly, yet most strangely ! Tristan, help me, help to follow this clue into the far past of my little life, for till it is traced out, I shall not know rest. "Manuel !" yes, as a household word it comes to me, uttered by lips I loved, not Hossein's nor another's. A thrill through my whole being tells me that !'

These incoherent words roused even Gawyne from his musings ; with wonder and keen interest he listened, then rendered them into Norman-French for the ear of Francesco and Morico. The almost unerring acuteness of the former, and his quick sympathy, were enlisted at once. Drawing the awe-struck boy to him, he stroked the bright locks which shaded his brow, then with re-assuring voice

questioned him concerning his origin ; he traced up, as Gawyne had done, the various stages of that brief existence, as far back as the desperate struggle which had thrown the child into Hossein's power ; behind that, all seemed a blank ; even Francesco's keen yet gentle mode of investigation could elicit nothing distinct, only impressions of the wildest and vaguest kind ; once in fever, the boy had fancied himself in a house large and wide, with many chambers opening one into another, and a foundation of rock, and wild waves leaping up to that rock, and dashing their cold spray in his face ; at another time he had raved of a high and awful building, whether church or mosque he knew not, filled with lamps and chanting voices and people, and in the midst a kingly man, on whose head they set a crown, and then all the people shouted. These things lived in his memory, and haunted his brain, but who could venture to say that they were more than the outpourings of a delirious fancy ?

Francesco next examined the baldrick worn by the boy. He had been very curious in such gauds once, and had outshone most of the youth of Assisi at feast or masquerade, in the bravery of his ornaments and weapons. Enough of that cunning remained, to enable him to decide that it was not of Italian workmanship. Morico, who had visited Constantinople, was inclined to think it the production of one of the many famous goldsmiths in that city. The effigy of a saint engraved upon it was too usual a device to throw much light on the wearer's history.

One more expedient presented itself to the Umbrian's fertile brain. 'Brother Morico,' he said, 'thou hast a rich gift of languages ; I pray thee, try one or another of them in this stripling's ear, if by any means we might find out his own native tongue.'

The friar obeyed, willingly though not readily ; for what linguist, however practised, has not experienced the difficulty of clothing his ideas, at short notice, in a foreign dress ? He tried the noble speech of Castile, but it woke no response in the Bulbul's mind ; the Hungarian language was, equally unsuccessful, and a specimen of rude guttural German picked up by him among the peasants of Thuringia, had no effect but that of provoking the boy's mirth. So silvery was the laughter, however, and so arch and bewitching the glance which accompanied it, that Fra Morico was fain to smile too.

Nothing disheartened, the good friar addressed himself to Greek, his last resource. He looked wistfully into the blue eyes which might never meet his again, and laying one hand on the boy's head, said in that language, 'My son, keep thou the commandment, and depart not from it, for in keeping the commandment there is life and peace.'

The words, slowly recited, struck De Boteler's ear by the music of their sound. He observed a slight tremor through the Bulbul's frame as Morico proceeded, and when he uttered the last word, 'Irene' or 'peace,' the boy started, and with quivering lips

murmured, 'Irene—yes—Irene—surely *that* was no dream !'

He sat down on the sand-heap, and mused intently, veiling his eyes with his tightly clasped fingers. No one spoke, fearful of disturbing that mysterious struggle with memory ; it proved unavailing, and after a while he looked up wearily, every feature working with distress and perplexity. Then Francesco went to him, and took the unresisting hand in both his own ; the boy with a sudden impulse wound his arms round Francesco's neck, drooped his head on that loving breast, and burst into a flood of tears.

Happy age ! when a few bright drops suffice to relieve the opprest spirit, and give it back to the tasks of life, serene and free as before ! The Bulbul soon recovered calmness, and even caught some of the glad enthusiasm that beamed in his protector's eye. 'He is ours !' cried Francesco, 'ours to train up for Christian knighthood ! This sacred effigy where-with he is girded, the broken memories of his tenderest years, the high thoughts that glow in his bosom, proclaim him of no infidel stock, but already dedicated to God. To God therefore be ascribed all laud and praise !'

The moment of parting was come. A boat, sent by the Genoese admiral, in whose company the Minorites were to return to Italy, was awaiting them. Time pressed, and a tumultuous crowd of crusaders of all ranks and ages, having found out Francesco's *place of concealment*, were thronging thither to see

the last of him. Homage such as theirs he shrunk from with horror, deeming it to be so much subtracted from the glory due to God, and dreading lest the weakness of his own heart should render it acceptable to himself. His farewells, therefore, were brief, though most emphatic. He kissed the boy's forehead, commending him tenderly to Heaven's grace and to Gawyne. Gawyne's hand he wrung once and again, saying, 'Hope on, my brother, hope on, for we are saved by hope; it shall be my care shortly to lay before the Holy Father at Rome the extenuations of thy fault, and the proofs of thy penitence; thou shalt hear from me at Acre, whither posts are continually going from Rome; inquire, therefore, in that place for Fra Bernardino, to whose hands the scroll shall be committed, and God grant thee therein the fulfilment of thy heart's desire.'

He entered the bark, followed by Morico; as it receded from the shore, De Boteler saw Francesco's hands outstretched in token of blessing, and heard his parting words, 'A Dio, figliuoli, a Dio!' ring above the plash of the waves.

Early the next morning De Boteler and his adopted brother turned their faces south-eastward. They were joined at Mansoura by their promised escort, bringing camels, tents, and all other requisites for a desert journey. These men were ordered to accompany them as far as Suez; there a band of Arabs, tributaries of Mel-edîn, were to meet them, and be their guides to the southern

frontier of Palestine. Tidings of great moment reached the Bulbul at the same time, and were by him carefully concealed from Gawwyne. Kor-edîn, incensed, it would seem, at his brother's leniency toward the Christians, had caused many of his prisoners to be put to death, and sent the rest to work as galley-slaves in various parts of his own dominions. It was rumoured also, and with truth, that this rapacious prince had seized on the whole of the treasure left by Malek-Adel, to be divided among his numerous sons. He vindicated this robbery by alleging that the money would be spent in raising fresh armies to exterminate the Crusading host, but this shallow pretext deceived no one.

Kor-edîn's energies had been displayed in another and more praiseworthy manner. He had caused Hossein Bey to be seized as a plotter against his sovereign's life. Mel-edîn, it appeared, had remained passive in the matter, or had interfered only to beg that the villain's life might be spared. This Kor-edîn had sternly refused, but meanwhile the wily Hossein had either tampered with his guards, or baffled their vigilance, and escaped. 'We knew it would be so,' observed the Saracen who related these facts to the Bulbul; 'sooner may the king of the serpents whose dwelling is under the Nile, be caught and bound, than this crooked scymetar of Satan !'

Our pilgrims plunged into the desert, into that awful region of solitude and illusion which throws *its* spell over the rudest and boldest, and most light-

hearted of mankind. Then as now, the pilgrim fared forth on his patient camel, meeting none, hearing no sound, not even the soft foot-fall of the beast he rode. In the sterility and nakedness of the expanse before him, the stunted thorn of the desert, scarce three feet high, was a welcome break on the horizon line. Whitened bones of men and camels served here and there as mournful waymarks. The sun even in that wintry season shed a marvellous glare and heat over the sand, which here and there glittered in the distance like a fresh-water lake. As they drew near, this mirage resolved itself to Gawýne's disenchanted eye, into a vast hollow between the sand-hills, encrusted with sparkling crystals of salt.

The tossed spirit of the Cheshire pilgrim found a strange rest in this monotony. Life with its turmoils and its storms which had visited him so roughly, assumed a calm and dreamy aspect. He believed himself in the land of enchantment, no longer subject to earthly or 'skyey influences.' On the fourth day, vanquished by the sun 'down-beating with unmitigated ray,' he drooped his head and slumbered. How long the ship of the desert bore him on thus sleeping, he could not tell; but after a while he was wakened softly by a sound of bells chiming—his own church peal—the bells of Wem, sweet and clear, rising and falling in his ear! That music, which had never sent its echo beyond the Shropshire hills, scarcely beyond the frowning walls of Wem Keep, right

opposite, now filled the clear air on all sides. He looked around, upward, but there was nothing, only the noonday sun overhead, and a quivering haze in the distance. Then, little knowing that such hallucinations are the frequent companions of desert wanderers, and knowing still less that the dryness of the atmosphere might account for them, he gave himself up to the conviction that those sounds were sent from Paradise. Blest in that belief, and in the sweet fancy that Rosamond hovered near, he journeyed onward with a lighter heart.

The southern horizon on the fifth day was bounded by a ridge of dark grey hills, Gebel Ataka. As evening drew near, the party rode by the then strong Castle of Ajroud, and were challenged by its Saracen warder. He looked suspiciously at De Boteler, whose sable surcoat and cap of mail showed differently from the attire of his companions, but a glance at the royal pass silenced all objections, and he suffered them to proceed.

The waters of the Red Sea, dull and leaden in the fading light, now became visible, and the Christian pilgrim, dismounting, hastened down to that sacred beach. He prostrated himself in deep awe, scarce able to believe that the breaking surges before him had indeed rolled over the deep sea-bed where Israel walked dry-shod. The Moslem escort caught something of his fervour, and as he rose, their leader approached him with a less unfriendly air than he *had* yet worn, and pointed out the range of Sinai

in the distance. Yes, those shadowy mountains far away were the same which had heard the voice of God, and witnessed the giving of His fiery law ! how terrible a thought for him who was conscious within himself that he had broken that law flagrantly ! Gawayne's heart quailed, and almost he wished he could turn back ; but then, his pilgrim vow ! and Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, and Nazareth, which lay beyond ! no, they must be reached through this region of terror and gloom.

After a few hours' rest in the squalid town of Suez, the pilgrims (for that title might also be applied to the Bulbul,) set forth again. De Boteler breathed more freely, delivered from the unfriendly surveillance of his Saracen spies. The sons of the desert, in whose guidance he now was, were of a very different stamp. They were tall stately men, with finely formed features, fleshless cheeks, and large dark eyes rolling slowly in their orbits ; most of them wore merely a woollen shirt fastened by a leathern belt, a 'kefia' or kerchief, loosely wound round the head with a piece of rope, and sandals of fish skin. Their sheik was more richly arrayed in a turban and wide blue mantle, and the 'sikkeen' or short sword (common to all Arabs) which he wore was of fine temper, and less rude make than those of his followers. Thus escorted, and mounted on the fresh camels, our pilgrims travelled round the head of the gulf, then turned their faces southward ; a strong north wind blew, and swept over the face of

the sea, which responded with a sullen roar; it lay to their right, now hidden by sand-hills, now seen with its blue background of African mountains. Clumps of palm or tamarisk enlivened the near view from time to time. The stunted thorny acacia, and here and there a wild date, began to show themselves.

Not a human being came or went that way, only a few patches of black ashes showed where roving parties had lately encamped. Our pilgrims fared forward for the most part in silence, giving the reins to their camels, which wandered off the track not unfrequently, attracted by some scented herb or prickly plant of the desert. De Boteler, well-armed and wary, kept a keen look out towards the deepening gorges on his left; but this habit of wariness did not impair the true pilgrim feeling. At night while all slept, and it was his turn to watch, he would stand at his tent door looking out on the starlit sea, his mind full of the signs and miracles there wrought, his rich voice chanting softly the Crusader's favourite Psalm, '*When Israel came out of Egypt.*'

The sense of awe grew deeper as Mount Serbal, huge mass of granite, rose to view, and they turned their faces towards the rising sun, and plunged into the solemn defiles leading to that mountain. On the sixth day from Suez they beheld the convent of St. Katharine, nestling under towering cliffs. The monks were overjoyed to hail a pilgrim band once more within their walls, and the abbot met De Boteler at the gateway, saying, 'Come in, ye blessed

of the Lord ; come in ! provender for your beasts, and gourds and dates for yourselves, shall not be lacking, and if this fare seems poor to you, it shall be eked out by such refreshments for the spirit, as no other place can furnish.'

In this sacred abode the pilgrims tarried seven days. Though the fare was coarse, and the cell they occupied cold and bare, a mere shelter from storms and from the jackals that prowled without, the place lacked not attractions. The Bulbul (by this name, for lack of a better, we must still call him) took delight in ranging through the surrounding scenery. It was a fearful joy, I ween, to climb to the highest peak of Gebel Katerin where the solid granite was split into a thousand diminutive pinnacles and smooth ledges, in some places so nearly perpendicular, that a false step might prove fatal. In these rambles, De Boteler always accompanied him ; he would not trust his precious charge with the Arabs, and being beside a practised mountaineer, he taught the boy's unused feet to scale those dizzy heights. Together they traced the mountain eagle to his eyrie, and the wolf to his lair ; together they wakened the awful echoes of Gebel Mousa, then started as their own voices were returned to them, cliff after cliff taking up the note, answering one another across the deep valleys. The boy's supple frame grew more vigorous and his limbs more muscular each day, and a tinge of brown mingled with the blush-rose on his cheeks. He throve on the maize-cakes, dried fruits,

and goat's milk, which his hospitable hosts freely offered, and each night slept the dreamless sleep of health and joy.

Not so De Boteler ; when his young brother lay down to rest, his work of penance began. Nor let any despise him, because perchance error mingled in these services. They flowed from a broken heart, and not one self-justifying thought marred their acceptableness.

‘ Four things which are not in Thy treasury,
I lay before Thee, Lord, with this petition ;
My nothingness, my wants,
My sins and my contrition.’

So prayed he, prostrate in the porch of Justinian's church. How beautiful it looked in the still night, many lamps lighting up its granite pillars, carved roofs, and domes rich with mosaic work ! For that church had no need to stint of light ; is it not well known, that ‘ by the myracle of God,’ the monks have ‘ plentee of oyle both to burn in their lamps and to eat ? For the ravens, and the choughs, and other fowles of the contree assemble there every year, and every of them bring a braunche of the bay or of olive in their beakes and leve them there ; of the whiche the monkes maken great plentie of oyle, and this is a great marvayle !’

Behind the altar lay St. Katharine's bones, in a shrine of alabaster. There, the monks averred, had been long preserved a staff plucked from ‘ the busche that brenned and wasted not.’ They called that

place the Shadow of God, and flitted about it night and day, almost weeping to think that the fair and noble Northman who had come so far on pilgrimage, self-accused, might but view it from afar.

The seven nights of watching, fast, and scourging, passed over, and De Boteler bade farewell to 'Katern's house,' leaving with the abbot a gold ring drawn from his finger. The priest saw his guests depart with a wistful eye, for full well he knew that many a moon would wax and wane before any Christian should adventure himself in those parts again.

The pilgrims proceeded without let or hindrance on their way. The Sinai range, with its sounds of echoing voices and muttering thunder, receded from their view, and after traversing many 'wadys,' some of them rich in inscriptions, and in quaint carvings of animals, they drew near the eastern horn of the Red Sea.

The next day and the next they rode along its shore, here white with millions of shells, there strewn with fragments of red coral; then crossing a very high mountain by a tremendous pass, along which the camels paced in single file, they reached Akaba, at the head of the gulf.

Here they saw a few mud hovels inhabited by Arab fishermen. Most of these primitive people however, dwelt under the beautiful though fruitless palm-trees that fringed the shore 'as an eye-lash does a deep blue eye.' They wove themselves screens

of camel's hair to keep off the wind, and needed no other shelter. A little higher up our pilgrims observed a small fort, and soon descried an officer of the Syrian Soldan with several attendants coming to meet them. This man eyed De Boteler suspiciously, and detained the party several days, on pretence of verifying the correctness of their passports. The delay irked Gawyne, for the nearer he drew to the borders of the glorious land, the more did his spirit burn and pant to be there. However, he endeavoured to imitate the philosophy of his young charge, who made himself friends and pastimes wherever he went. Here his chief delight was to go fishing on the blue sea, not in a boat, (nothing so near akin to civilization was to be seen on that gulf, once the great dock-yard of Solomon!) no, he would join the native fishers on the strand, and go afloat with them on the trunk of a tree newly cut down, helping them to cast their nets into the deep; or he would construct for himself lines like theirs of camel's hair and hooks of fish bones, and angle patiently in the shallows, where numberless small fish played; and whatever he did, there was an unconscious dignity in his manner of doing it, that struck and attracted even the rudest; Gawyne himself was not insensible to the spell, and often wondered whence it could arise.

At length the governor of Akaba suffered them to depart, and they took their journey northward, passing the approach to Petra, and leaving Mount

Hor on their right ; after some days they reached the boundary of the wilderness, and parted, not without regret, from their Arab guides.

The desert sands were exchanged for green vales and uplands. Trees appeared, then ploughed fields, gardens, and vineyards walled round ; then the olive groves of Hebron, and the fair ‘city of the friend of God,’ with its minarets shining in the winter sun. The hum of voices and lowing of kine was heard, and the road, or rather track, appeared worn by the feet of camels, horses, and foot-passengers. Once more De Boteler felt all eyes upon him ; but he shrunk no longer from their wondering or frowning gaze.

We may not linger with our pilgrims near the spot which Moslem and Christian alike revered as the burying-place of the patriarchs ; nor at Mamre, by the leafless terebinth called Abraham’s oak. Joyfully did a poor Christian hermit who dwelt under its boughs, invite De Boteler to approach this venerated tree, planted, he averred, at the creation of the world, and clothed with marvellous green leaves, which all withered away when our Lord was nailed to the Roode. “But though it be dry,” he whispered, “yet hath it great virtue still, for see, bold knight, this splinter which now I give you, shall keep yourself from the falling sickness, and your horse from being foundered ; and now God speed your way !”

That same evening De Boteler saw before him, on the crest of a high bleak ridge, Bethlehem. Let

each picture to himself, as far as he can, the emotions which shook the the crusader at that sight, the awe, the grief, the rapture which made his heart overflow ! Quickly flew the hours of that night, divided between three pilgrim stations—the charnel house of the Innocents, the chapel wherein it was said had vanished the Eastern Star, and (highest of all) the Cave of the Nativity. Then, as now, man's rash hand had marred the awfulness of the place by lining it with marble, and decking it with gold, silver, and azure ; but what recked De Boteler of these ? He remembered only that here the

‘ Flower of goodness, root of lasting bliss,
The well of life, whose streams are purple blood,’

had sprung up, turning man's misery to brightness, his gloom to glory !

Onward, onward to Jerusalem ! the white line of her buildings glimmers from afar, cresting a ridge opposite Bethlehem ; they have left behind them Rachel's tomb, and the Convent of Mar Elias ; the deep ravine of Hinnom lies between them and the Holy City, but they know not of it till it opens at their feet. Now the castle becomes visible, and the city walls winding up and down the slopes ; and from behind the hill of Evil Counsel, come forth the Temple-Mosque, and fair Olivet beloved of Christ !

They wind down the vale of Jehoshaphat, then ascend again, and draw up at the gate of Bethlehem ; their passport is examined, approved, and lo ! their

‘horses’ hoofs ring on the stones of the streets of Jerusalem!’ De Boteler’s heart is ready to burst as he beholds Moriah before him, and the towers that cover the Holy Sepulchre; he dismounts, and falls on his knees on the pavement, and from his very soul ascends the crusader’s cry,

‘Receive in glee these tears, O Lord so good!

For never wretch with sin so overgone,

Had fitter time, or greater cause to moan.’

Turning to the left, and leaving behind them the stern square tower of Hippicus with its Roman basement, our pilgrims advanced among ruinous heaps and waste places. The city-wall to their left, reminded Gawyne of that which girds Chester; it was low but thick, built of large stones, and at intervals furnished with steps leading up to the battlemented breastwork. A narrow lane to their right soon led them away from this dreary and almost deserted locality, and opened after a few hundred yards on the precincts of the Holy Sepulchre; but what a scene of ruin did those precincts present!

There stood the church, with its open dome and ‘fair high tower for bells,’ uninjured indeed, but desecrated to the worship of the Moslem. A strong guard of Saracens kept the doors, and Imaums chanted the praises of Allah and his prophet in the sanctuary of the Christian faith. This was not all; a work of wanton destruction was going on among the chapels and convents which clustered round that ‘holy and beautiful house!’ Kor-edîn, true to his

word, had begun to demolish them, sparing only such buildings as were objects of reverence to the Saracens also. The noble hospital convent of St. John of Jerusalem had not escaped. Part of it was already pulled down ; and a gang of chained slaves were at work with pick-axesⁿ on a doorway of rich Saracenic architecture. The pilgrims drew near in time to see a statue of the Baptist, which had occupied the centre niche over the door, fall heavily to the earth ; a mocking shout from the Saracen guard proclaimed its fall, and was echoed by a crowd of spectators.

The Bulbul flushed high as he witnessed this insult to De Boteler's creed. He stole a glance towards his friend, and saw his chest heaving, and lips compressed. The boy longed to speak to him but durst not, for Gawyne's whole soul was in his eyes, and these were strained in the direction of the convent. Unconsciously he reined up the animal which he rode so tight, as almost to throw her upon her haunches ; she swerved, and the slight movement recalled her rider's self-possession. He dismounted, and throwing the reins to the nearest of the escort, came up close to his companion's palfrey.

'Brother,' he said, grasping the boy's wrist 'mark yonder captives ? I pray you peruse their faces well, and tell me, saw you ever the face of anyone amongst them afore ?'

The boy rose in his stirrups, shaded his brow with *his hand*, and scanned the wretched prisoners one by

one. 'There are Koords among them, as I think, and swarthy men from some scorching clime; and there is a Jew—Soldan Kor-edîn loathes the Jews—and there is—yes, surely, 'tis he of the lion-crest that denied me access to your Earl!' He stopped abruptly, and with suspended breath. The dull sound of a few strokes struck by a wooden hammer on some minaret near was heard, then a sonorous call to prayer. A pause for devotion followed; when that was over, the crowd opened, and the prisoners, a piteous procession, were led back to their dungeons.

They wound along slowly, for they had weights attached to their feet, and heavy chains on their bare arms; they trooped past our pilgrims, some amongst the wild Asiatic captives staring at them and their horses with fierce curiosity. Then followed a tall youth, evidently of European extraction, whose head drooped on his breast; his gait was unsteady from exhaustion, and from the weight of a bundle of tools laid over his shoulders; he neither looked up, nor in any way noticed the taunts aimed specially at him by the Saracen guard, but advanced, leaning on the shoulder of a little man, a Frank also, with small black eyes lively and bead-like, nearly extinguished by his huge yellow cap. Though in evil case himself, this little man seemed most occupied with the ill plight of his miserable companion. 'Hugo, good Hugo,' he said, 'be not pigeon-livered, I pray thee! hold on for the honour of the three sheaves, till we reach our cells. Why, man, we can but die once;

even a fool knows that ! I have learnt it since my bells and bauble were ta'en from me !'

The prisoner strove to mend his pace, but reeled, overcome with weakness ; Kor-edîn's soldiers, brutal by long custom of war, and like their prince, exasperated against the Franks, showed no relenting ; they urged Hugo on with taunts and gibes, striking him as Orientals do, with the palms of their hands. De Boteler, meanwhile had convinced himself that Fitzwarin was before him, and what a tumult of feeling did the sight create ! They had fought their first field together, they had won Earl Randle's approval together, and ever maintained a kind of rivalry, on Gawyne's side untinged with bitterness. Both had loved Rosamond Fytton, and sought her love, and that Hugo had sought it utterly in vain, established for him a claim on Gawyne's ever ready compassions. Since his great reverse, he had sometimes thought with anguish, never with envy, on Hugo's brightening course ; and now he saw him a prisoner, broken in mind and body, his sympathy knew no bounds.

'O heaven !' he cried, preparing to thrust his way through the crowd, 'would my manor of Wem were in my hand to ransom this brother-in-arms ! and the fool too, my sweet fool, Tholomieu ; ah, thou gaudy gold, never before did Gawyne thirst for thee !'

'Does Gawyne so wrong his brother ?' asked the Bulbul reproachfully. 'Is not mine thine, and thine

mine, forgetful one? Go now, buy back thy friends at any cost.'

De Boteler could scarcely utter a reply. 'My tongue,' he said fervently, 'is poor in thanks, but not my heart.'

At that moment Fitzwarin stumbled and fell; his persecutors closed round him, but Gawyne's strong hand thrust them aside; he stooped, and laid Hugo's head brotherly on his knee, calling at the same time to one of his escort to bring water. But the soldiers were not to be so easily overawed; they set on De Boteler with yell and curse, and the 'quarrel,' as Tholomieu observed, 'seemed likely to drink blood.' In happy hour, however, Gawyne remembered the imperial passport at his girdle, and held it up in the sight of the officer who commanded the guard. At the same time the Bulbul manfully took his stand at De Boteler's side, shouting, 'A ransom! a ransom!'

'Ay, a ransom!' reiterated Gawyne eagerly; 'quick, Sir Captain, name the price that shall set this gentleman free, and this poor varlet also.'

De Boteler felt his hand feebly grasped, and looking down, saw Fitzwarin's features convulsed; it was nothing less than the grey shade of approaching dissolution that was stealing over them; his breathing became quick and fitful, and laying his hand on his heart, Gawyne felt it cold as a stone.

'Too late! too late!' Hugo struggled to say. 'I am a dead man, Gawyne; lay my head low—thus—thus.'

Gawyne, inexpressibly shocked, did as Hugo bade, and seeing the traces of agony and unrest still marked on every feature, gave him the hilt of his dagger to kiss ; but Hugo put it from him. ‘Gawyne, Gawyne,’ he muttered as his falling breath would permit, ‘lay thine ear to my lips. I have done thee very foul wrong ; black accursed envy spurred me to it ; hearken, I say. Earl Randle never said thee nay—he loves thee, yearns after thee, as father after son. Yes, by the Roode he does !”

More he said, but it died away in inarticulate murmurs. De Boteler recoiled in horror, astonishment, almost disgust ; but the thrill was momentary, and the sight of that agonized face recalled softer thoughts. Again he laid the cross-hilt on the dying lips ; the flickering breath tarnished for a moment the brightness of the metal, and before its lustre could return, the spirit of Fitzwarin was fled.

•

CHAPTER XIV.

‘Patience and sorrow strove
Which should express her goodliest——.’

‘What must the king do now? Must he submit?’
‘The king shall do it.’

‘Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come.’ The storms that sometimes sweep across the Grecian Archipelago in March, are hushed by the breath of April; its waters, so boisterous a week before now break on the beach in the tiniest of waves, with a sigh, and a curl of snowy white. On the main-land of Asia Minor, opposite Samos, stands a rocky promontory; its sides are covered with a rich variety of trees, and dotted with villages, which enjoy an unusual share of peace and plenty, under the rule of the emperors of Nice. One enemy only the power of the Lascaris has been unable to cope with, and that is the plague; so rife from remote ages on that coast, so mysterious, and irresistible, in its visitations! It is now subsiding from Chanli, the village to which our attention is directed, and the people begin to come forth and resume their avocations cheerfully. The women

may be seen carrying their water-jars of red clay on their backs to the fountains ; the men till the ground, or spin goats' hair for tents. Others go leisurely forth to the woods, armed with hatchets ; they have no intention of cutting down trees, (that were too laborious a process,) but they will look out for any that the winter storms may have levelled, and will cut off their smaller branches for firewood. While so employed, they hear the sound of hoofs, and suspend their labours to watch two travellers approaching from the direction of Smyrna. Sir Richard Fytton and Fra Angelo, for it is they, are in earnest conversation, but as they draw near Chanli, the former pauses and looks up towards a pleasant house built on the brow of the overhanging hill. He is perceived ; a white kerchief is waved repeatedly, and he lets his tired animal relax her speed, assured that all is well with Rosamond.

Much had happened since, in the stormy winter night, they made their escape from Samos. Their ally, the captain of the galleys, had rowed so stoutly as to baffle with ease the feeble efforts of their pursuers. Nor had they been at a loss for a place of refuge, for Messer Marino possessed a house of pleasance over against Chanli ; and hither they, under his escort, had directed their steps. Their eccentric host had, as we have seen, secured for his own enjoyment a large portion of his father's treasure. These riches, acquired in so questionable a fashion, he at once began to squander, and he would fain

have lavished a part on luxuries for his English guests, especially Rosamond, but Sir Richard, with ill-concealed contempt, repelled his advances, and refused his gifts ; the knight's whole mind was set on prosecuting his journey to Damietta, and with this view he borrowed a sum of money from a Smyrneote trader who had known Fra Angelo at Constantinople, and who moreover was in frequent communication with the crusading camp. At the end of January they were to set out, but alas ! Sir Richard had caught the plague at Smyrna, and only returned to his temporary home to sicken of it, and to lie at the gates of death for six weeks. The infection spread through that devoted household, and speedily found a victim in blind Tito. Rosamond was the next to fall ill ; she had tended Sir Richard night and day, and striven to comfort the broken-hearted little Tita, but these efforts had proved beyond her strength and she lay down plague-stricken. Then all the secrets of that pure and warm heart welled forth ; her father's name was continually on her lips, uttered in tones of such passionate love as drew torrents of tears from Tita ; and another name, unknown to Tita, was murmured by her with clasped hands hourly ; even in delirium there remained a consciousness that it was not to be spoken aloud ; the mention of it sometimes lit up her wan features with joy, but oftener convulsed them with anguish, ending in such deep stupor as could scarcely be distinguished from death. Physician there was

none to be had ; but Fra Angelo more than supplied the place of the miserable empirics of the country, pouring in cyprus wine and restoratives, where their lancets would have drained the life-blood. His treatment succeeded with both father and daughter ; and his unimpassioned nature was roused to quicker thrills of gladness than it had known for years, as he saw them recover. Rosamond's convalescence was far less rapid than Sir Richard's, for in this disorder a weight on the spirit often prevents bodily strength from returning. After many days, however, the burning pain about the heart, and low delirium, passed away ; the plague-sore dispersed, and moisture returned to her flushed and sunken features. A feverish longing to be gone now took possession of her, and Sir Richard, who partook of this impatience, made all arrangements for joining the first caravan to Attalia. It only remained that he should revisit Smyrna for some needful business, and also take a courteous leave of Messer Marino, who was now seeking his pleasure in that dissipated capital. Fra Angelo read in Rosamond's eyes the desire that he should accompany her father to Smyrna, and he did so the more readily, because he hoped to find there some despatch from the camp. Immediately after the escape from Samos, he had sent a message to his superior, Francis of Assisi, acquainting him with his safety, praying his further commands, and also recounting the fortunes of the English knight and his daughter. It was now time that an answer to this

communication should arrive, and on its tenor the friar's movements would depend.

Rosamond meanwhile had remained under the care of Tita. The Samiote maiden found solace for her violent grief, in waiting on the gentle stranger ; and so strong did the attachment between them grow, that both began to dread the hour of parting.

This evening they had seated themselves on a grassy knoll overlooking the plain and the murmuring sea. From the thicket behind them trilled the liquid notes of a thousand songsters. Nightingales were there, pouring out their first and sweetest music, but Rosamond hearkened less to them than to the thrush and blackbird whose homelier song had last greeted her in the copses of Fallingbrome. The plane was bursting into greenerie, and so was the beautiful Lydian oak with its long delicate leaf cut into ribbons like the fern. A tree of willow-like growth waved its silvery sprays in the breeze, and shed from the golden flowerets which tipped them a fragrance exceeding that of the orange blossom. Under foot, anemones, crocuses, and small parti-coloured irises had sprung by thousands from the soil ; every bright thing seemed to come forth and sun itself in the April ray ; there were beetles in green and gold, butterflies of many hues, lizards basking on the stone walls, till scared by a foot-fall ; brilliant woodpeckers glancing athwart the woodland. All was sweetness, life, and joy ; even the shrill cry of the great grasshopper, which seemed to ape the

birds, flying on every side from tree to tree, brought no disturbance to the harmony.

Rosamond sat still and pensive, with Tita's guitar on her knee. It was an instrument of primitive construction, the handiwork of a Samiote ancestor, and in form like those we find sculptured on ancient tombs. It answered feebly, yet sweetly, to the English maiden's touch, as she sang this lay of her own framing :—

Y E A R N I N G S .

“News from the camp—what news ? Oh, tell me quick,
That this poor heart, whose throbbings crowd so thick,
Break not—delayed hope maketh it sick !

“What news ?” good news ! the Heavens vouchsafe a token,
On every side the heathen rout is broken ;
Of Christ's own chivalrie glorious things are spoken.

“Oh I am glad—and yet this wayward breast
Still flutters, fill'd with moaning and unrest
Where all fought well, say, did not *one* fight best ?

“Yes I am glad—and yet my heart is sore,
Quick, burning tears these strained eyes run o'er ;
Where all did much, say, did not *one* do more ?

“Oh, he is gone—he answers not, nor hears—
He pours his tidings on more joyful ears,
And I am left to feed on mine own fears.

“News from the camp—mere mockery of my woes !
What is the camp to me, since he—its Rose
And chiefest, still a banish'd outcast goes !

“Dank night dews clog his golden locks—his brow
Droops sadly, and the cheek which never, I trow,
Was blanch’d by fear or shame, is death-pale now !

“Gawyne my love, my life—joy of my life
And yet its keenest sorrow—thy true wife
Yearneth to thee, amid rebuke and strife

“Of evil tongues, as flowers do to the light—
When wilt thou come to me, mine own true knight ?
Oh, make no tarriance, lest I perish quite !”

‘They come, lady, they come !’ cried Tita, who had been set to watch at the extremity of the orchard. ‘They ride quickly forward, scarce a quarter of a league from hence.’

‘Thou seest them, girl ?’ exclaimed Rosamond, rising joyfully. ‘Is there no mistake ? for certainly my dear father bade me not look for him till to-morrow ! My eyes, dimmed by this sickness, fail me at my heart’s need.’

‘Madonna,’ replied the simple Samiote in some confusion, ‘chide not your eyes, for they shine blue and serene as ever ; the horsemen are yet far off, and hid in the shade of the fir-wood ; not I, but one that signalled to me just now, the longest-sighted man in all Natolia, spied them crossing yonder glade.’ She paused, blushing.

‘Oh, the brave captain of the galleys !’ returned Rosamond, observing a picturesque stalwart figure descending the hill to meet her father. He has been our very faithful guard during these five

days of loneliness ; at night also, I have marked the flash of his lantern as he paced our garden bounds.'

'Oh yes, Madonna ; it is his pride to make up to you the foul wrong shown you in Samos ; this morn, indeed, he was compelled to ride to Scalanova on an errand that could not be deferred ; but lo, he is here ere sunset, awaiting your commands !'

'Hath he brought thee cheery tidings, my poor maiden ?' inquired Rosamond ; 'thou hast, I think, kinsfolk at Scalanova ?'

Tita's pretty lip trembled, and a flush came to her olive cheek. 'Kin is not always kind, Madonna, she answered ; 'and my aunt, Anna Xylaloe, has taken occasion of this visit from him to let me know that rye-bread is very dear ; also that her lemon-orchard has been nipped by the frost, and that her silkworms, my cousin Tessa's dowry, have died off, leaving poor Tessa portionless. She bids me, therefore, seek a home with my uncle, the rich money-lender at Palattia, yonder !' Every feature of Tita's brown expressive face spoke her distaste to this proposition.

'Would I had a shelter to offer thee,' said Rosamond ; 'but, alas ! like Noe's dove, I have no rest here for the sole of my own foot ; rough journeyings, sea and river perils, and perchance many weeks' sojourn in a noisome camp, await me when I go hence ; it is not fit thou shouldest share these
hardnesses.'

‘Oh, that I might!’ cried the girl impetuously; ‘it is my cherished desire to tend you in your journey; it took root in my father’s grave, and the tears which watered that have nourished it. What cure for sadness like holy pilgrimage? what means so likely to bring refreshment to my father’s soul? also, how else can I hope to show myself thankful, Madonna, for your melting charity to him and me?’

She paused for lack of breath; the lady answered gently, ‘Thou owest me nothing on that score, sweet soul, for is it not more blessed to give than to receive?’

Tita replied by pressing the lady’s transparent hand against her forehead, and then imprinting upon it a kiss. ‘Thy desire shall not be forgotten,’ added Rosamond; ‘I will lay it at a fitting time before my father; thou, meanwhile, take counsel in the matter with him, who, if I err not, has thy heart and troth; scarcely will he consent that his little ewe-lamb should exchange this quiet shore for the rude licence of a camp.’

‘No camp on earth,’ answered Tita hurriedly, ‘could be so thickset with snares, as that loom-chamber in Samos! but peace, rash tongue, we may not revile the dead!’

The dead! exclaimed Rosamond; ‘is the hoary Doge dead?’

‘He is, Madonna; the galley-master has even now told me, that seven days ago, his falling sickness took him suddenly, and he died ere one could wag a finger to help him. A post was sent to Smyrna to

acquaint Messer Marino with this news. Ah, Madonna, how much better is it to mourn for a father, than not to mourn for him ! Our Marinaccio is no hypocrite, to make a show of grief which he feels not ; when, however, they pressed upon him the princely tiara, he was troubled, and put it vehemently away, saying a chaplet of vine-leaves fitted his brows better. To be brief, he, being weary of Smyrna, purposes travelling to Attalia, to await his brother Agnolo, now with the camp in Egypt ; to him he will give over the principedom, bargaining for such revenues as may enable him to live a life of idlesse. My Massimo—the galley-master, I would say—attends his lord on this expedition ; they will set out in two days for Attalia, or rather if Massimo's pleadings can avail, for Damietta itself.'

Rosamond was inclined to smile at the mixed motives which prompted Tita's sudden enthusiasm for pilgrimage ; the sight of her father, however, diverted her thoughts into another channel, and in a moment she was clasped in his strong embrace. Their greetings were uninterrupted, Fra Angelo having lingered behind in conversation with Massimo, the galley-master.

The father and daughter returned together to the house, through a trellised walk arched over by pomegranates in blossom. The dazzling scarlet of these magnificent flowers was a perpetual feast to Rosamond's eye ; but the knight glanced at them with less complacency.

‘My pale-faced wench,’ he said, ‘these flaunting flowers mock the waxen hue of thy cheek ; I would give them all for one wreath of May from the banks of Bolyn.’

‘We shall return thither by and by, my dear father,’ answered Rosamond cheerfully ; ‘meanwhile sit down on this bank of primroses, and while Tita dresses savoury meat for your supper, tell me how it has fared with you.’

Sir Richard sighed and drew her closer to him as he replied ; ‘I have despatched my business without let or hindrance, by the help of the saints and of brother Angelo ; he is a man of prudence and keen wit, Rosamond, no mere fantastic shaveling ; to-morrow, if thou canst make thyself ready, we travel with a great caravan towards Attalia, and there take ship for the camp or for Acre, as best may suit ; the friar has instructions to go along with us ; that lisp-ing fantastico, Don Marino, has also joined himself to the company ; I hope, child, his presence will not much irk thee, being, as he is, a very fool.’

‘Oh, it will not irk me at all,’ replied the maiden, ‘specially if you will grant a prayer I have to make, my dear father ;’ and with this preface, she unfolded to him Tita’s project. Had it been a less practicable one, Sir Richard would scarcely have refused his sanction ; as it was, he rather rejoiced than otherwise, that his dear and fragile treasure should have the companionship of one of her own sex in this rough journey. So that matter was

speedily adjusted, subject to the further decision of Tita's betrothed, Massimo.

Still Sir Richard looked uneasy, and his glance sought out Angelo, who, rosary in hand, was pacing a natural terrace looking south-west. He resorted much to the spot, from which might be seen the shore where Saint Paul had knelt down and prayed with his converts, and exchanged with them farewells, how bitter yet how sweet! While standing there, his rapt eye fixed upon the deserted sands, Angelo had many times mused on the great Apostle's example and teaching. Sadness and self-abasement had always prevailed, as he compared St. Paul's fervent zeal with his own lukewarmness; now another and deeper cause for self-reproach had unveiled itself to a conscience perhaps morbidly sensitive. 'What!' he mentally exclaimed, 'is my heart so weak, my soul so unstable, that a few chance words recalling the dreams of youth, have power to shake them to their centre? Alexios, can it be that thy name yet thrills through me thus? Am I so craven-spirited that rather than risk to see thy face again, I am ready to turn aside from my superior's command? swerving, like the disobedient prophet, from the path of duty, perhaps of martyrdom? No, no, it must not be! shame on this cold heart, which forgets the present sorrows of others in dwelling on its own past bitterness! Teach me, 'dolcissimo Signore,' to say with thy tried servant, 'Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I

might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received.'

Cogitations such as these soon brought into order a spirit habitually bent on doing the will of God. As Fra Angelo once more passed by the spot where the father and daughter sat, Sir Richard seemed anxious to detain him. 'Good brother,' he said, 'I pray thee expound to me the dark sayings of our Smyrneote friend yesterday; of what recent event did he speak which renders the journey to Attalia less perilous than heretofore? What truce is that, which enables caravans once more to pass to and fro betwixt that port and Smyrna? I did but imperfectly comprehend his drift, only the name of Alexios of Trebizonde, often repeated, struck my ear. Is it possible he too has yielded to the Moslem?'

'Not to the Moslem, but to the decree of the Most High, has Alexios yielded,' replied Angelo, with unusual warmth. 'Listen, brother! long did the Komnenos fight single-handed against the enemies of the Cross. Our bold Templars for a season lent him aid, but alas! quarrels arose between themselves, and they forsook him; next, the Emperor of Nice, jealous of his fame, made league against him with the Moslem. The Soldan of Iconium, thus strengthened and greatly incensed at the stubborn resistance of Alexios, vowed to fill the principality of Trebizonde with fire and slaughter, ravaging its length and breadth, and sparing neither babe nor woman. Then rose Alexios, and said with the king of old, "I have

sinned, but these sheep, what have they done ?” and with a bursting heart, he went himself (for he would endanger none other) to the proud Soldan ; for his people’s sake he craved peace ; it was readily granted, for the Soldan feared him even in his low estate. Thus the sword has returned to its scabbard, and the highways, long unoccupied, may once more be trod safely.’

‘Such safety may be purchased too dear,’ said Rosamond sadly ; ‘out upon the churls that left that great prince to fight and fall alone !’

‘It is written,’ replied the friar in a low voice, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy ; when I fall, I shall arise ;” if there is justice in heaven, so shall it be with Alexios the Faithful.’

Rosamond marvelled much to hear the impassible friar speak so vehemently. You have perhaps known and consorted with this great Alexios, Father ? she asked, seeing him thus unwontedly animated. The question so innocently put, was a hard one to answer ; of the public acts of the grand Komnenos, his victories, and his reverses, Angelo could on fitting occasions speak, but the early connexion between that heroic prince and himself, had for sixteen years been a sealed subject, and it cost him a keen pang to break through it. However, he was resolved on perfect self-mastery, and had so far attained it as to answer mildly and without effort :

‘The story of our former friendship and of his fortunes is soon told, daughter. Perhaps of all the

godless oppressors that ever defiled earth, his grand-sire Andronic Komnenos was the most unnatural. All Europe knows how he caused his son, the partner of his throne, to be strangled. The murdered prince left two young children, Alexios and David; and these were privately brought up in their birth-place, imperial Constantinople. Through God's grace they inherited nought of the evil that tainted their family; it seemed as though their Georgian mother, descended from a long line of royal martyrs, had transmitted to them the hero and martyr spirit of her race. She died early; but their aunt, a Princess of Colchis, forsook them not; she caused them to be princely bred up, and sought out a tutor from Italy to inform them in the learning, and chivalrous lore of the West; I, the younger son of a great house in Pisa, was chosen for this office, and dwelt ten years with them in the city of Constantine. Oh splendid, yet loathsome capital! how but by miracle did my Alexios dwell in thee unsullied, as once the princely youths of Judah in Babylon? While yet a stripling, he made his first essay in arms by my side, against the Assassins of Syria. But the measure of the iniquities of Constantinople was now full, and vengeance at hand! a great host of warriors under the blind Venetian Dandolo, gathered themselves together sixteen years ago, and beleaguered the city; how they sped, and how they founded a new empire there, is already known to you; but ere the storm fell, my pupils, scorning submission to a foreign power, had

taken refuge in Colchis ; I, mine office fulfilled, had already quitted Constantinople and returned to my native Pisa.'

There was a touch of sadness in his voice, but withal a softness so unusual, that Rosamond was encouraged to proceed. 'The lady of Trebizonde, Father, her whom minstrels sing as Irene the Fair, is she worthy of her high lot? know you aught of her?'

'I knew that illustrious lady once,' replied Fra Angelo, 'and doubt not that God hath added to the gifts with which He richly endowed her, His best gift of patience.'

'Ah me!' said Rosamond; 'she who has wept two sweet babes, bereft, the one of life, the other of speech, has need of patience.'

The friar made no reply; he turned away, and stood abstractedly gazing on the sea, now shifting and sparkling in the sunset lights; his mind's eye was far away, looking back across the waves of a troubled life to the spot where his affections had made shipwreck long ago; for Irene, the daughter of a poor Byzantine nobleman, had been his 'bright particular star' from her childhood. Her father had fallen in one of the bloody Bulgarian campaigns, and at his last hour committed his child to the chivalrous guardianship of Angelo. He placed her at once in a Greek convent (for Greeks and Latins were not at variance then as now); where she grew up in happy seclusion, sheltered from the perils of a

corrupt capital, and exquisitely lovely in face and form. Her only link with the world outside her convent walls, was Angelo ; to him she looked up with undisguised affection, gratitude, and trust. There was a tacit understanding between them that when the period of her residence in the cloister should expire, she was to become his wife ; and Irene had acquiesced in this her father's wish without a shade of reluctance. She had reached her seventeenth year, and Angelo had passed his thirty-third, when a change came over the spirit of their dream ; Angelo was suddenly called upon, to accompany Prince David Komnenos, his younger charge, on a secret journey to Colchis ; during his absence, one of those bloody revolutions which continually convulsed Constantinople took place, and Irene's convent home was set on fire and plundered. Its terrified inmates fled or hid themselves from the insolence of a lawless rabble ; in this dire strait, Irene was found and brought to a place of safety by a young gallant gentleman, whom she recognized as the Prince Alexios. He committed her to the care of an aged Byzantine lady, a tried friend of his house, then silently took his leave, and saw her no more till Angelo's return.

Angelo *did* return, met his princely pupil, saw Irene, and in his unsuspectingness brought these two much together. It were beside our purpose to tell how Alexios's passionate admiration of the being he had saved from a fiery death, unconsciously became

love ; how Irene questioned with her heart whether its quick beatings whenever the name of Komnenos was spoken arose from gratitude alone ; how both shuddered when a dim suspicion of the truth flashed across their minds ; finally, how Alexios abruptly quitted Constantinople, and joined a second expedition against the Assassins. A rumour came that he was dead ; Angelo in his grief imparted it to Irene, now plighted to him, and gathered the true state of her affections from her white and speechless lips. He said not a word, but went away, and for three days pondered bitterly over the course it behoved him to take. Meanwhile, the rumour of Alexios's death was contradicted, and news came that he had fought valiantly and conquered the ' prince of the mountains.' Then Angelo made up his mind ; he at once released Irene, and wrote to the victorious champion, bidding him return to Constantinople and to her. Alexios obeyed the former part of this injunction with a heart rent by conflicting passions ; when he reached the capital, Angelo was gone ; he had ordered everything with scrupulous forethought for the safety and honourable maintenance of the orphan maiden ; he had bidden her a calm farewell, and by writing commended her once again to Alexios ; these things done he had set sail for Italy.

The siege and capture of Constantinople followed quickly on these events ; then followed the splendid career of the Komnenos brothers in Asia Minor ; still Irene remained in seclusion, and it was not till

two years after Angelò's departure, that she consented to become Alexios' wife. Fourteen summers had now elapsed since she had become the sharer of his glories and his sorrows ; a husband and wife in love more blest, the bright eastern sun never shone upon, but in friendship, both felt and owned an aching void ; for Angelo and Alexios had become as strangers one to another—

‘They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs that have been rent asunder.’

If Alexios found it so, how much more his generous rival ! Angelo came back to the West an altered and a reckless man, shunning society, and vainly endeavouring ‘to free the hollow heart from paining’ by feats of arms, or by intense study in the schools of Pisa. At length the trumpet-call from Francis of Assisi reached him in his learned retirement ; it broke through the morbid repinings of years ; it stirred the heart's blood which disappointment had frozen, and called him once more to the exercise of the loftiest chivalry. Henceforward he vowed himself ‘to faith's pure strife,’ and as Francesco's trusted friend and helper, found in ceaseless activity true rest.

When the friar once more approached his fellow pilgrims, he found Sir Richard relating to his daughter the fortunes of the camp, as he had learnt them at Smyrna. She listened breathlessly, her pale hands now raised, now crossed mournfully on her

knee. As he proceeded, he became agitated and embarrassed in manner, and at length broke off, signing to Angelo to draw near. There was a silence, Rosamond looking from one to the other wistfully ; then Sir Richard said with more than wonted abruptness, 'Friar, my child asks for true tidings from the camp ; we must not hide them from her, albeit disastrous ; yet are they hard to tell.'

'What, heavy slaughter, father !' said the maiden to Angelo. 'The chamberlain of France, the Marshal of the Hospital, three hundred Templars, all dead or captive ! what more of ill remains untold ?'

'Much,' said Sir Richard, shaking his head ; 'the camp of Earl Randle, my master, has been assaulted, and some of his followers slain ; the Earl of Arundel and others are sick ; plague or poison have mown down thousands ; Foulques de Maulèon has been called to his account suddenly, and with him two brothers of Saint Dominic.'

He was interrupted by the pressure of Rosamond's hand on his arm. 'Indeed ?' she asked ; 'is he whom men call the scourge of heretics dead ? and are those his fellows dead also ? Then must their grim tribunal be broken up !' She sat erect, her colour varying from pale to red, and a gleam of hope lighting up her eyes ; she raised them eagerly, and met those of the friar fixed upon her with a look of sadness and apprehension. She thought, perhaps rightly, that there was a shade of reproof in his expression. 'Now forgive me,' she murmured, recalled to herself

by that glance, 'for gathering hope where I ought to have felt sorrow ; but those dark men—the rack—the chains—oh, if that yoke is broken, my heart must needs rejoice !'

The last words died away in inarticulate murmurs, as she hid her face on Sir Richard's shoulder. The knight's perplexity increased. 'Hark ye, my wench,' he said, again signing to Angelo not to withdraw. 'I see the drift of thy thought, and will dally with it no longer ; Gawyne de Boteler, thy betrothed and my son, has been absolved and brought back to Holy Church ; the Umbrian brother whom thou knowest has done this.'

'It is so, daughter,' added Fra Angelo ; 'my messenger from the camp brought these tidings ; he saw not indeed our superior, who had sailed for Italy a month before ; but from a Minorite left in the camp he heard that brother Francesco had found out the young gentleman named "Tristan the Left-handed." Six days they communed apart in the desert ; on the seventh, our superior, well satisfied of his repentance and good dispositions, did with abundant rejoicing pronounce absolution over him ; this sentence, Francesco doubted not would be speedily and surely ratified at Rome.'

The friar paused, not as one whose tale is told, but as one who has heavy tidings yet in store, and hesitates to impart them. Rosamond, absorbed in rapture, noted not his bearing, nor her father's clouded face ; she could only fold her hands and

look upward to the glowing sky, saying, 'I am too weak to bear the bliss ; help, Mother Mary !'

'Now by Saint Julian,' exclaimed Sir Richard, 'the truth must be told, yet how to dash to earth her new-found joy, I know not ; do thou speak, Friar, for I could as soon run this rapier through her breast.'

Angelo, thus appealed to by the unhappy father, placed himself before Rosamond, and addressed her in those calm accents which brace the trembling heart to courageous endurance :

'Daughter, hearken, and pray meanwhile to God for needful strength ; this gentleman of whom we spoke, being newly shriven, and at peace with God and man, set forth under favour of a pass from the Soldan, to visit Sinai, Bethlehem, and the holiest Sepulchre ; he set forth, well armed and accompanied, a few days before blessed Epiphany. By Lent-tide news reached the camp, of a tumult in Jerusalem, wherein one answering to him in stature, bearing, and complexion, was seized by Kor-edîn's infidel guard and cast into prison. Angelo paused, and looked on Rosamond, as though measuring her strength.

'Speak on, Father,' she said falteringly ; 'I am strong!' How did her death-like pallor contradict the assertion ! she had glided from her father's hold, and now knelt on the enamelled turf like a prisoner awaiting sentence of death. Scarcely could the friar have found courage to utter it, had not the hourly

contemplation of heavenly bliss made the miseries of our mortal pilgrimage appear to him light and momentary.

“And they that weep, as though they wept not,” he said solemnly ; then proceeded with his narrative thus : ‘An Hospitaler, escaped as by miracle from the hands of the unbelievers, reached Acre, and from thence the camp ; he avers that he beheld this young gentleman in chains, led with others through the streets of Jerusalem ; he saw him no more alive, but one night while sleeping amid the ruins of his convent, was wakened by a marvellously fair boy, who beckoned him to arise, and gird himself for the charitable work of burying the dead. He followed this stripling, or angel, as he thinks him to be, to the burying-place of the knights of St. John ; here he and another, whose face he saw not, dug a grave ; then came forth from the crypt hard by, one closely muffled, bearing in his arms a corpse, which he reverently laid in the earth ; the Hospitaler had but one glimpse of the dead face, yet does he constantly affirm it to be that of the captive Englishman and none other ; scarce had they flung in the sacred mould, when a party of Saracens was heard drawing near, and they in haste fled each his own way ; the Hospitaler brought this report to his Grand Master, and to King John, showing them moreover a leathern glove with three chalices broidered upon it, which, said he, had evidently belonged to the dead ; such, daughter, was the report

rife in the camp when my messenger left it ; he added also, that the Duke of Austria made great lamentation over the gauntlet, saying, " Give it me, that I may hang it up in my tent, for never was gentler heart broken by man's contumely, than that of Tristan the Left-handed." "

Not a word of this recital escaped the maiden's ear ; at its conclusion she felt herself once more grasped by her father's supporting arm, and heard him say in a smothered voice, ' My tender fawn, would this killing shaft had lighted on me, and not pierced thy gentle breast ! but thou art cased in heaven's own armour of proof.'

She clung to him convulsively, whispering, through her sobs, ' My father, I still have thee, and he is mine, and I am his ; am I not then still blest ?'

Sir Richard led her into the house, and committed her to the care of the wondering Tita. After a while he returned to Fra Angelo, saying, ' My child is bent on pilgrimage to-morrow, and in truth, I think, 'twill be her best solace ; for me, brother, I long to be with my liege lord again, and therefore the more joyfully hail her desire to be gone ; she has laid her down, feigning, poor heart, to need sleep, lest I should be disquieted ; she sends thee lowly thanks for so lovingly telling her all, and she asks thy prayers for Tristan and for her.'

That night passed quietly, and before the morrow's sunbeams had kissed away the dew, our pilgrims

were all astir ; by the banks of the Mœander, they found a large and motley company assembled. The next morning they set out with their faces eastward, still keeping near the river, and following the beaten track which in the days of the old Roman empire had led from Ephesus to Iconium. A large number of their party were traders, who took advantage of the league between Nice and Iconium to dispose of their rich silks and other wares to the unbelievers. These men travelled with strings of loaded camels, themselves mounted on strong little horses, and armed with knives and daggers. They and the travellers bound for Attalia were to fare together as far as Boudroum (the ancient Sagalassus), at which place a road branched off due south, to the Mediterranean. The procession was swelled by our acquaintance, Don Marino, with a large train of servants, in rich apparel. He himself rode a mule covered with silk housings and tassels. Another mule was provided for him, bearing on its back a soft saddle, over which was erected a small light tent of fine white woollen material fringed with red. It was pierced with eye-holes before and behind, and a light ladder for the convenience of mounting and dismounting was suspended from one of the poles. This sort of conveyance, Tita informed her mistress, was usually reserved for the use of female travellers, but his 'Seigniory' was not ashamed to travel by it, finding the air of the mountains they should presently come amongst, too sharp and nipping

for his taste. An armed guard under Massimo, and a number of sumpter horses, completed this part of the caravan. Several gentlemen and a few ladies from Nice and Smyrna, with their followers, were added to the train ; lastly Sir Richard marked with astonishment and disgust a certain number of turbaned Mahometans who appeared on amicable and even intimate terms with their Christian fellow-travellers. The train moved on very slowly ; and our pilgrims kept close together, mingling little with the rest of the procession. Rosamond was mounted on a mule, and rode by her father's side, wrapped in her pilgrim cloak and hood. Tita, unused to hardship, and enervated by the Samian climate, was ensconced in a pannier on one side of a mule, her companion being a matron from Scalanovo, known to the captain of the galleys. They were both screened from accidents of weather by a canopy such as we have described, only coarser in material. The friar, in conformity with the rule of his order, refused to bestride horse or camel, and either walked or rode an ass, happily a young and spirited animal, which kept up easily with its less humble companions. Angelo pursued his way for the most part in the silence and meditation prescribed by his vows, but from time to time he scrupled not to consult with Sir Richard as to their movements and the possible hindrances that might beset their way. Neither did he hesitate to seek conference with Rosamond, and win that mourning maiden from

the contemplation of her own sorrows. Perhaps they were harder to bear now, than at the moment of Angelo's disclosure ; that first shock had quite borne her spirit down, but in the watches of the night, its natural elasticity had prevailed, and a *hope* had arisen that the report *might* prove erroneous—that the Hospitaller *might* have mistaken or exaggerated what he saw—in short, that Gawyne might yet live ! If 'fear hath torment,' hope, based on the crumbling foundation of our wishes only, 'hath torment' no less ; and by sunrise the poor girl's thoughts had become so bewildered and distracted, that certainty of evil would almost have brought relief. She longed to utter them to her father, but he was in full activity, and so much elated by the near prospect of rejoining his liege lord, that she shrank from thrusting her cares upon him. Reserve and awe would have kept her aloof from the friar, but, as we have said, he drew near, and after uttering the customary 'Peace be with you,' at once entered upon the subject next her heart. It was a tender theme, but Angelo touched it so wisely, so gently, and with a courtesy so refined, that Rosamond, while she marvelled at his words, felt their healing influence.

She told him, in reply, of her inward struggle, tremblingly confessing her hope that Gawyne might still be alive, and praying him to bear with this her folly. The friar's reply restored her calmness ; and so far from treating that lurking hope as visionary, he acknowledged that it had presented itself to his

own mind more than once. ‘‘Twas already my purpose,’ he added, ‘if God bring me to Damietta, to find out the Hospitaler, and from his own mouth learn the whole of this story ; should a doubt of this young gentleman’s death remain, I or some brother of our order will, by God’s help, seek him out, were he in the heart of Kor-edîn’s dominions.’*

During several days, our pilgrims travelled on through exquisite and varied scenery. The Mœander, swollen by melted snows, rushed along between green plains and slopes, rightly called the orchard and granary of Asia. It was fed by many streams, whose rapid waters gleamed through the shadow of the enormous plane-trees which overhung them, and worked mills of rude construction with overshot wheels. Their channels, rocky and deep, were brightened by the bursting buds of the rose-laurel, and by many

* The first Franciscans shrank from no risk in seeking and rescuing Christians from the power of the Saracens ; many of them died in these heroic endeavours in the lifetime of their founder. Alas, that Francesco’s noble work should so soon have deteriorated, yet so it proved ; there was a fault at its very foundation, which within a few years told on its superstructure, causing Italy’s sublimest bard to exclaim,

‘ So soft is flesh of mortals, that on earth,
A good beginning doth no longer last
Than while an oak may bring his fruit to birth.

‘ * * * * *

Humility for Francis won a fold.

‘ If thou reflect how ‘ he’ began, then view
To what an end doth such beginning lead,
Thou’lt see the white assume the darkest hue !’

green and nodding ferns. To the north ran a range of high limestone hills, clothed with trees, of which the dark pine and Lydian oak were the most conspicuous; the cliffs which topped this range were pierced in many places by deep natural caverns, the resort of robbers or of beasts of prey. Both these evils were at this time kept in check by the prudent government of the Emperor of Nice, and of his son-in-law, the partner of his throne, John Ducas. This prince, now in the prime of life, united the wisdom of the lawgiver with 'the minute diligence of the farmer;' he carefully cultivated the crown lands, and filled his pastures with oxen, sheep, and hogs; historians tell of a diadem, set with diamonds and pearls, which he one day brought to his queen, smilingly informing her that its cost was defrayed by the sale of the eggs of his innumerable poultry. His peaceful policy towards the Mahometans, although selfish and short-sighted, and bitterly rued afterwards, did for a while tend to increase the prosperity of his subjects. So Sir Richard and the friar were compelled mentally to own as they beheld the signs of peace and plenty on every side.

Rosamond was not of a temper to remain unobservant of the beauties and wonders around her. She noted the white hovels of the peasants, the bright red or blue boddices of their women, often laced with silver, the swarthy, bright-eyed, and scantily clothed children, overflowing with mirth and laughter; she watched with interest these little

ones, at seven or eight years old, employed in harnessing and unharnessing the huge docile camels. Her eye followed the eagle or vulture to its eyrie, the hoopoe to its thickets, and the flocks of bee-eaters on their predatory excursions after wild honey. While resting at the various halting places on their journey, these objects beguiled her heavy thoughts. Tita would show her the young tortoises basking by the water-side, or climbing over their mother's backs, and fighting for the most elevated position on her shell ; and Massimo once caught for her amusement a yellow-green chameleon, and was rewarded by her look of wonder as she marked the creature fade to dull grey, then become spotted brown, then gradually resume its bright original tints.

Another and still more effectual solace to her griefs was provided for Rosamond by the friar's care. Seeing her eye riveted by the ruins and ancient inscriptions, which abounded on their track, Angelo took occasion from them to rekindle the pilgrim spirit within her. He related to her in graceful Italian the history of Saint Polycarp, his holy life and pastoral zeal at Smyrna, and his glorious martyrdom by fire. Another time, he described the ancient glories of Ephesus, its temple of glittering white, its army of heathen priests, its Asiarchs, and the black hideous image of Diana, round which their worship centred ; he had made pilgrimage there on the Feast of blessed Paul, her conqueror, and had found the place, albeit a pestilential lonely morass,

still named after her, 'Asalook, or City of the Moon.' Rosamond hung upon his words, asking over and over again for the legends of Nicholas of Myra, and Eugenios of Trebizonde, or listening to the burning words of reproof addressed to corrupt Constantinople by her fearless bishop, Saint Chrysostom ; but most of all, she delighted to learn that Saint John the Divine, the beloved of his Lord, had dwelt in the very land where now she trod ; here amongst these mountain fastnesses he had encountered the robber chief, and subdued him to the obedience of Christ ; here he had travelled from village to village with no weapon save his pastoral staff, preaching everywhere, 'Little children, love one another.' Here his parting breath had been drawn ; here he, last summoned though best loved of the glorious Twelve, lay sleeping in some nook of this fair land, unknown to men, but dear to God and to angels !

They now approached Laodicea, or Esky Hissar, leaving all traces of fertility behind them, and crossing perfectly barren sand-hills for several miles, There was no sign of human life to be seen, and the vast ruins of the ancient city 'wore an air of indescribable desolation. Temples, tombs, and theatres, lay heaped together, as though destroyed by earthquake. Flocks of bustards wandered amongst them ; and in a ravine that intersected the city, Rosamond observed ten or twelve large black eagles, and more than fifty smaller white ones, hovering over the carcase of a camel recently dead

A cutting wind blew across these solitudes, and at night keen frost came on, and rendered the shelter of the vast silent walls of Laodicea very acceptable to our pilgrims. By the aid of large fires fed with peat they contrived to keep themselves tolerably warm ; and early the next day they resumed their eastward journey. A ride of several hours brought them to the clear lake called in ancient times Ascania ; they skirted its swampy shore crowded with storks, then turned southward, and entered a range of bleak and solemn mountains. These were an off-shoot from the Taurus, and their strange shapes and jagged marble points impressed our travellers with awe. Soon, however, the feeling of bodily discomfort mastered every other sensation ; as they ascended the mountain side, gusts of wind arose, hissing fiercely among the pumice-stone rocks, and whirlwinds of volcanic dust detached from them circled in the air ; presently a storm of hail and snow came on, and on the crest of the ridge the pilgrims were obliged to dismount, and lie down till the violence of the gusts abated ; then thoroughly drenched, they continued their way, and a two hours' descent brought them to the ruins of Boudroum.

Here our pilgrims took up their quarters in a theatre erected by Greek colonists eighteen hundred years before ; its arched lobby, still in perfect repair, afforded them shelter, and a clump of aged walnut-trees, whose roots had upheaved some of the carved

marble seats, supplied them with fuel. Neither was society wanting for the enlivenment of such as needed it, and specially of the drenched and discomfited Messer Marino. A company of merchants and an Emir in the service of the Soldan of Iconium, with his suite, had halted here on their westward way, and from them much news might be gleaned. Don Marino lost no time in changing his soiled apparel for a brave new suit, and having warmed his inner man with sundry cups of spiced drink, sallied forth in quest of 'some new thing' either to 'hear or tell.' In this quest he was doomed to disappointment, for the Emir proved silent and stately, and the merchants were absorbed in their own projects and calculations. He therefore sauntered disconsolately back towards the arched chamber, where his attendants had spread a luxurious couch for him, but on his way, the bright flicker of a watch-fire attracted his eye, and he listlessly turned his steps towards it. The sight of Rosamond Fytton seated near the ruddy blaze quickened his pace, and unbonneting with more show of respect than was his wont towards woman, he inquired of her health, and how she liked that place.

'Indifferent well, I thank you, Seignior,' she replied courteously; 'our northern breeding uses us to these icy sleets, which others deem so churlish.'

On this slender encouragement, Marinaccio stretched himself before the fire, and beckoning to the captain of the galleys, who was engaged with

Tita in culinary operations, he bade him 'go fetch a can of cyprus wine, likewise the potted ortolans from Cremona, and his gilt beaker and broidered napkin.' Massimo departed in silence, like a man heartily ashamed of his errand ; at the same moment, Sir Richard, accompanied by Fra Angelo, entered, rather to Marinaccio's discomfiture. The knight seemed disturbed in mind, and after a brief courtesy to the self-invited guest, said to his daughter : ' We learn even now, child, that this place has of late been wrested from Nice by the Soldan of Iconium, and that his collector of customs will come ransack our baggage at day-break to-morrow ; this, of a truth, is an indignity hard to bear.'

He paced the narrow vestibule in much discomposure ; Marino meanwhile muttering, ' What matters it, so long as we have supper and bed, on whose grounds we find them ? The English podestà is too nice in such matters ! Let him take pattern from that mirror of knighthood, Alexios, called the Faithful ! He, not content with paying homage at Iconium, still lingers there, delaying his return to Christendom from day to day.'

The friar looked up quickly, his pale brow flushing with unwonted heat. ' *He* is a rash man,' he said, ' who would fasten a charge on the Komnenos' honour !'

' As soon might you fling your cap on the horns of the moon !' added a deep voice behind him ; and the captain of the galleys, to whom great freedom of

speech was allowed, came forward. 'Please your Seigniories,' he said, drawing himself up, 'I can tell you the rights of this matter, for my brother, who has served the Komnenos, man and boy, eighteen years, is now here, and has informed me of all.'

'Say on, friend,' answered the friar; 'it is no vain curiosity that urges me to bid thee speak.'

'Out with it, fellow, and be not over-tedious,' yawned Marino; 'but first fill my beaker and the English Magnifico's, to the brim.'

Massimo did as he was bid; then with much animation and variety of gesture, spoke as follows:—
'You have doubtless heard, gentles, how the Komnenos, when a youth, fought with the Assassins, and fleshed his maiden sword on the youngest son of their chief. The wolfish sire of this wolf-cub, swore to be revenged in kind, and kept his oath. Some eight years back, the faithful emperor, being at war with Nice and Iconium, and sore pushed, sent his two boys for safety to a castle on the eastern border of his realm. It was a strong place that had never been taken, nor could be, unless by treachery from within. The Assassin chief, wily as Satan himself, knew this, and sent one of the craftiest of his creatures, disguised, to worm his way into the hold. This villain, called the the 'crooked serpent,' or 'Hossein the poisoner,' did his devilish work well. By his aid the place was taken and burnt. The Prince Joannes, then five years old, was by miracle snatched from the flames and carried back to his mother at

Trebizonde, but terror and anguish had unfixed his childish reason ; he has ever since been possessed by a dumb and deaf spirit, unable to learn the arts of war or peace, or the mystery of kingcraft ! The little Prince Manuel, a babe four summers old, was seen no more, and most men believe that he perished in the flames. From time to time, indeed, rumours that he yet lived were bruited abroad, and the Lady Irene's heart leaped high, but only to sink in deeper woe !

Fra Angelo rose, unable to restrain his emotion. ' Surely,' he said hoarsely, ' had the child been alive, covetousness, if not a better motive, would have led his janitors to restore him !'

' Reverend Padre,' replied Massimo,' the Grand Komnenos, though poor, offered such vast rewards for tidings of his child as would have drained his treasury. One day, six years ago, there was brought him a mysterious scroll, with a device of a crooked serpent inscribed upon it. The writer thereof affirmed that Prince Manuel yet lived, and further appointed a rendezvous near Emessa, promising, if six thousand gold besants were there paid down, to restore the child at once. Ah, my brother ever thought there was some substance of truth in that scroll ! The Komnenos was then on the eve of battle, and could not forsake his host ; but he, by draining his coffers, raised the sum, and forthwith despatched his treasurer with it to Emessa. The treasurer (beshrew his black heart) proved a very

Judas. We knew it not then ; but years after, when his worthless life was ebbing away, remorse wrung the truth from him. He kept five thousand besants for himself, and offered one poor thousand as ransom for the kingly child ! It was refused with scorn, and the treaty broken off.'

'Since then,' inquired Rosamond, 'has no trace of the lost one been found ?'

'None, Madonna,' answered Massimo, 'until fourteen days ago ; then the lady Irene, being at Trebizonde, and praying, as is her wont, in the church of Saint Eugenios, a scroll was dropped at her feet, by some hand unseen. The effigy of the crooked serpent was inscribed upon it, and underneath were written these words : "Thy son lives ; send by a sure messenger ten thousand besants to Attalia, and he shall be restored to thee ; refuse or delay, and he must perish." The place and time of meeting were further set forth, and a pass-word given. The empress, tossed betwixt hope and fear, sent this scroll to her lord at Iconium ; then tarrying but to collect the crown jewels, and to appoint her brother-in-law, Prince David, viceroy, she set her face southward with a strong guard. Meanwhile, dark hints of the same import as the scroll, had been whispered in the ear of the Komnenos at Iconium. For this cause and none other, he made some tarriance in the city ; but finding all inquiry vain, he has now rejoined his princess, and the two together are journeying towards Attalia. My brother, as their

forerunner, has even now reached this place, and doubtless the royal train is not far off. Your pardon, gentles, for the license my tongue has taken to-night ; but, head of Bacchus, to hear such a prince maligned would make the stones cry shame !'

Having thus relieved his mind, the galley-master returned to the humbler duties of the kitchen. A savoury mess of buffalo-steaks was now served up for the travellers' supper, and Sir Richard did ample justice to them. The capricious and sickly appetite of Marinaccio had been whetted by the mountain air so effectually, that he too ate heartily. Little more was said, and the party shortly after broke up. The Sanuto returned to his quarters ; Fra Angelo, full of busy wakeful thought, insisted on sharing that night's watch with the vigilant galley-master ; Rosamond and Tita lay down to rest, near the fire, on a pile of cloaks and furs ; and the knight, sufficiently weary to enjoy the prospect of uninterrupted repose, folded his cloak about him, and was soon buried in a fast sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

‘When Fortune means to men most good,
She looks upon them with a threatening eye.’

WE need scarcely say that it was Gawyne de Boteler who had carried his ungenerous rival, Fitzwarin, to the grave ; Syr Tholomieu, ransomed by him from captivity, and the Hospitaler before mentioned, had helped him in this charitable work. The Hospitaler, afraid of the consequences if so bold an act were discovered, fled at once to Acre, and from thence to Damietta. His partners in the deed, less easily alarmed, remained behind, and Gawyne, secured by the royal passport, spent several days, unmolested, in devotion before those shrines which warriors and kings desired to see, but could not. The hoary olives of Gethsemane, the church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Way of Sorrows, even the Mosque of Omar, with its awful Stone of Sacrifice ; all these, by virtue of Kor-edîn’s pass, he visited. Truer pilgrim heart never beat on those hallowed spots ; no, not even in the host of saintly Godfrey, when crusading zeal and love were young ! At the foot of Calvary the self-aborring thrill, the prayers, the vows begun on Sinai, were perfected ; he rose from the ground,

calmed, purified, full of hope, self-renouncing, strong in the strength of God, gentle as a little child. Surely his mother beheld, and rejoiced over him in that hour !

On the fourth day, De Boteler left Jerusalem, and took his way towards Acre, accompanied by the Bulbul, Syr Tholomieu, and a fresh relay of armed guides. To place his young charge in the great house of St. John was his first aim ; his next to inquire for Fra Bernardino, and the papal pardon of which he was to be the bearer. Armed with this, he resolved to seek an audience of the Countess of Chester, now at Acre, and ask her mediation on his behalf with the stout earl, possibly still alienated from him by Hugo's jealous misrepresentations. Leaving his just cause in her hands, and his pupil in those of the hospitalers, it was his purpose at once to prosecute his search after Rosamond Fytton and her father. In this object the Minorite Bernardino might, as Francis of Assissi had suggested, prove a very helpful adviser. Gawayne would therefore form no definite plan before seeing him, though his heart was set on visiting the southern ports of Asia Minor, Crete, and the south-eastern coast of the Morea, and inquiring in each of these localities for traces of shipwrecked pilgrims. In truth, the adventure seemed a hopeless one, yet Gawayne's mind found relief in pondering upon it. Whatever the issue of his search might be, he had pledged himself to return from it to Damietta, and

take his stand under the banner of the Cross until victory or death should close the struggle.

‘Vain thoughts that shall not be at all!’ Another path is marked out for thee, young warrior of the Cross; thou shapest for thyself a course of action, and knowest not that a crafty foe is near to thwart that course; thou deemest thyself free, and knowest not that the meshes of an “Assassin” are closing round thee.

Hossein Bey, ‘Hossein the Poisoner,’ ‘the Crooked Serpent,’ was that foe. The “Assassin” sect, to which, as we have seen, he belonged, had its home and cradle, and the residence of its princes, among the wild mountains of the Khorassan; but its votaries under various disguises were scattered all over the East. ‘Here,’ says De Sacy, ‘they are seen personating’ dervishes; there they escape detection as grooms or horse-soldiers; when Conrad of Tyre was to be slaughtered, you see them assume the garb of Christian priests, gain the confidence of their victim by an affectation of piety, and stab him at the altar.’ The great Saladin having expressed his detestation of this sect, a ‘bird of the air carries the matter’ to some amongst them, and forthwith he is attacked by three Assassins, and narrowly escapes with life. Infatuated by the ‘haschisch’ which they drink to excess, and by the fatalist doctrines of their sect, they bear without flinching the severest torture. When the Count of Champagne made alliance with their mountain prince, and visited his

stronghold, a high tower was pointed out to him, at each battlement of which stood a man habited in white. 'Have you any subjects as obedient as mine?' said the Assassin chief to his guest. At a sign from him, two of these men cast themselves down from the tower, and were dashed to pieces. 'If you desire it,' he added, 'the rest will follow their example; if you have any enemy whom you wish to be rid of, let me know, and the thing shall be done.'

Such was the training which Hossein Bey had received from infancy. It had distorted his mind as effectually as the hempen decoction had distorted his limbs. His earliest feat, the murder of Conrad, had raised him to a bad eminence of fame amongst his fellows, but at the same time it had made a double portion of cunning requisite to shield him from the vengeance of Christendom. He had, twenty years later, carried woe and confusion into the house of Komnenos. Deeming his services ill-requited by his prince, (son and successor of the well-known 'Old Man of the Mountains,') he had kept the lost child of Alexios under his own eye, and carried him to Egypt. Here, with the aid of several brothers of his sect, he had brought discord and well-nigh ruin on the host of Mel-edîn, not sparing to attempt that mild monarch's life. A train of events, utterly unforeseen, had frustrated his plans. He made his escape, as we have already said, but in so doing did not neglect to provide himself with as much treasure

as could be stowed away in small compass. Thus furnished, he crossed the desert towards Syria with the speed of light, passing by De Boteler and the Bulbul on their first day's journey. To re-possession himself of the latter, and obtain his meditated vengeance on the former, were now his chief objects, and unsuspecting as his victims were, there seemed no great difficulty in carrying out their destruction. He himself, fearful of falling into the hands of the Sultan of Damascus, embarked near Jaffa, on board a vessel manned by pirates of his sect. They were bound for the south coast of Asia Minor, 'where,' says De Sacy, 'Assassins swarmed, being protected by the Soldans of Iconium.' They consented, however, to linger awhile on the coast of Syria, while Hossein's creatures' carried out his scheme for entrapping the unsuspecting Englishman.

De Boteler travelled rapidly from Jerusalem to the neighbourhood of Acre. He gave a transient glance to the castle of Montjoye, full of stirring memories to a Crusader; the well of Samaria; the green and lofty eminence of Tabor, strewn with blackened ruins; Cana, known to him from childhood as the legendary home of "Cance the bride;" Mount Cain, over against Nazareth, where the first murderer, sculking like a wild beast amid bushes and briars, was said to have been shot by Lamech's arrow. He turned aside to kiss the supposed impress of our Lord's Blessed Feet on the rock of Nazareth, nothing doubting that the kiss, offered by

pure lips, would render the pilgrim invisible to all evil-intentioned persons. This belief was destined to be rudely shaken three days later.

A few miles south of Acre, the party halted for the night, near the sea side, making their rude beds in a cave that looked westward. De Boteler had noted some signs and looks of intelligence passing between the men who composed his escort ; and this circumstance so far aroused his suspicions that he resolved to watch the whole of that night. The Bulbul, much fatigued, soon lay down to sleep, and Syr Tholomieu followed his example, after draining a spiced cup of wine presented to him by the leader of their band. The little jester was not of a temper to court unnecessary hardships, even on pilgrimage, and finding the sea-breeze chilly, he retreated to the inmost recesses of the cavern. Here he soon fell into a sleep so heavy, as to warrant his after suspicion of its having been the effect of some narcotic. When he awoke next day, the morning was far advanced, the waves were sparkling and springing forward at the very mouth of his strange dormitory, the sun shone brightly on a dark sail far away towards the horizon, and he was alone ! He arose, shook himself to be sure this was no dream, sought for his companions, but found no human being near. He observed fresh foot-prints to the edge of the sea, and scattered arms and scarfs, as though some struggle had taken place in the darkness. Too much terrified and bewildered to do more than conjecture that

pirates had borne away his comrades, the hapless jester wandered up and down at random for many hours ; he remembered not in his wretchedness that he was now within two leagues of Acre, nor could his benumbed and exhausted limbs have carried him thither. Happily a gay and gallant party of the Christian garrison of that town chanced to ride his way ; an esquire of the Countess of Arundel recognized him, and he was picked up and straightway conveyed to the presence of his patroness, the Lady Clemence of Chester. It was ever after a subject of boasting to Tholomieu, that when that noble dame beheld her poor fool alive, she wept for joy ; nor can we doubt that as he unfolded his eventful history, the death of her favourite Fitzwarin, and the disappearance of stout De Boteler, the gracious lady's tears flowed again, and that for sorrow of heart unfeigned.

Like some sea-bird with sable wing skimming the main, the pirate vessel shaped her course north-westward. De Boteler, betrayed by the Assassins who had formed his escort, lay 'fast bound in misery and iron' under the deck. Day and night were alike in that narrow and noisome prison. He had no companion ; none to tend the hurts and bruises received in his hand-to-hand fight with his captors ; none to relieve his agony of doubt respecting the fate of the Bulbul. So passed three weeks, the little vessel sometimes tossing on the sea, sometimes seeking concealment under the wooded shores of Cyprus.

Early in April it reached the deeply-indented coast of Asia Minor, and its crew landed at night in a secluded creek some miles east of Attalia. The moonlight showed a range of mountains, majestic, dark, and still, rising opposite to them. These they reached after riding rapidly for some hours across a broad plain. De Boteler, chained to two of his guards, was debarred from all communication with the rest, nor could he ascertain whether the Bulbul was of the company or not, though more than once he fancied he caught the tones of his young clear voice. As day began to peep, Gawyne was bidden to dismount, and led up a rocky path under which a mountain torrent thundered along. The party halted after an hour's steep climbing, and De Boteler saw before him a cliff tipped with snow, and honeycombed with natural caves varying in depth and height. Into one of these, overlooking the precipice, he was thrust; and now for the first time he came face to face with his captor, and recognized the slouching figure and villainous countenance of Hossein Bey.

The Assassin drew near with a mocking laugh, and coolly examined link after link of the strong double chain which bound Gawyne. Having convinced himself that no human strength could break it, he prepared to withdraw, muttering, 'Thou art mine, haughty Frank; to none save Eblis will I resign thee; neither shall he claim thee for his prey, until the spells of the poisoner have by inchmeal drugged thy whole being. Ay, frown on me, if thou

list ; but know that ere long thou shalt grovel at my feet, an abject and unresisting victim !’

Gawyne’s only reply was a defiant smile ; but Hossein, practised in every species of mental torture, saw his curdling cheek, and guessed how the young blood froze at the prospect of a fate immeasurably worse than death. He glided up to his captive, and rather hissed than whispered in his ear, ‘If thou needest counsel or shrift, seek them of me. I shrove Conrad of Tyre an hour before I stabbed him.’

He had not calculated on the effect of his words. Gawyne started to his knees, the chains clanking as moved. ‘Get thee hence, Satan !’ he exclaimed ; and joining both fettered hands, he thrust Hossein from him with such force that the Assassin all but fell over the edge of the cliff. He saved himself by clutching at a projecting splinter of rock, then tarrying but to cast a look of intense malignity on his prisoner, withdrew precipitately.

Two days and nights went by like a fever-dream. No one was permitted access to De Boteler except the outlaw who brought, or rather threw him his food. This consisted of coarse bread, and of a fermented liquor, probably the usual beverage of the country. The former he partook of, the latter he would not taste, lest magic or poison should have rendered it baneful ; he chose rather to cool his parched lips with the water that trickled drop by drop down the walls of the cave. For a while the roar of the cataract below deafened him ; but his ears

soon grew used to it, and other sounds riveted his ever-wakeful attention. There appeared to be much sharpening and furnishing of weapons, great confusion and contention, fierce outcries and muttered curses; then a tramp of many feet going down the rocky descent could be distinguished. Deep stillness followed, and the voices of godless men were exchanged for the glorious voices of the waterfall and the rising storm. A keen wind had arisen, and snow-flakes were whirling thick at the entrance of the cavern, when the robber band re-appeared, their wild figures dimly seen in the evening twilight. They hurried up the stony ascent, bearing with them wounded and groaning comrades. De Boteler gathered from their suppressed and sullen voices that they had met with a repulse. No sooner had the moon risen than Hossein's voice was heard giving the signal for departure. Four Assassins, at a sign from their leader, closed round the Englishman; their naked blades flashed in his eyes, and while three of them held him fast, the fourth slackened the gyves on his feet sufficiently to admit of his walking with tolerable ease. The procession then set forth, and once more Gawyne encountered the gaze of Hossein, who had put himself at the head of it. His misshapen form was cased in a shirt of untanned leather, with plates of iron on back and breast; a cap lined with iron defended his head and ears, and in his girdle gleamed knives and daggers of various sizes; but Gawyne marked none of these; his eye

was fixed on the long light lance which Hossein carried upright in his hand, for at the top of it hung a trophy which he recognized but too well. It was the baldric of silver coins which the Bulbul always wore, and had so often and so strenuously refused to part with. Knowing the boy's passionate love for this relic, De Boteler felt certain he could not have resigned it without a determined struggle, and what could the issue of such a struggle be, but death either instant or lingering? A thrill of agony convulsed him at this thought, and Hossein saw it.

From this state of mental torment one word or glance might have relieved De Boteler. His 'young brother' was for the moment safe; whatever Hossein's ultimate intentions might be, his sense of interest now was as powerful a protection to the boy as another man's sense of justice or humanity might have proved. No sooner had they landed in Caria, than Hossein went to him, and plied him with flatteries, promising immediate freedom, and hinting at some glorious approaching disclosure, some brilliant prospects opening before him. The villain insinuated that his own efforts had been mainly instrumental in building up his captive's fortunes; and thus endeavoured to establish a claim on the boy's gratitude, but in vain. His advances were met by silence, his promises by unbelief. When with honeyed words he begged the loan of the baldric for three days, his prisoner unclasped and surrendered it without a word. Deep distrust and loathing, and a dread of inadver-

tently adding to De Boteler's peril by rash speech, sealed up his lips ; nor was it till Hossein, offended and almost abashed, had turned to depart, that the Bulbul's pent-up feelings burst forth.

Then, springing forward, he caught Hossein's scarf to detain him, and cried, ' Where is my brother, that I may go to him ?'

Hossein softly released his scarf, and answered with a smile, ' Let not my lord call this Nazarene slave his brother !' There was a deadly meaning in that smile, which quenched at once all hope of his relenting. The Bulbul turned away in despair, then glanced his eye round Hossein's retinue to see if there were any face there that told of gentler thoughts, but there was none ; the stolid stony countenances of the Assassins, or the coarser, more ruffianly features of native bandits, alike banished hope. The boy's heart died within him ; but he stifled all external tokens of anguish, and slowly and firmly re-entered the cave allotted to him for an abode. Even here he, though deeming himself alone, repressed by a kingly instinct the rising passion of grief ; clasping his delicate hands together, he paced up and down the cave, murmuring such words as these : ' My brother, thrice my brother ! since for love of hapless me, thou hast incurred the hatred of this son of darkness ! Gawyne, my only friend, my stainless pattern of truth and faith, how shall I, forlorn, live without thee ? What to me the crown, the sceptre yon deceiver spake of, if thou,

meanwhile, art left to his tender mercies? and I, oh bitter thought! know not how to help thee; my boyish wit can devise no plan, my feeble arm can strike no blow, that would not rather hasten thy doom than avert it; nothing is left to me but girlish lamentation, and these quick choking sobs which drown my breath! What said I? Pale cowardice, avaunt! I will wait, and watch, and hope. Yes, brother, if earthly hope die, I will lift mine eyes to heaven; to Him, the divine Cross Bearer whom thou so lovedst, mine ignorant, perhaps unhallowed lips, shall frame a prayer for thee, and He will hear it.'

So saying, the boy knelt down in the darkest recess of the cave, where mocking eye, he thought, could not penetrate. Here, with reverent gesture, he strove to pray, but the sounds which broke from his lips were low and inarticulate, and heavy sighs and sobs alone expressed his sense of desolation. These, however, were quickly cut short, and he started up on hearing a noise like the rustling of leaves beside him.

The Bulbul was not alone; a wild figure lay stretched on the floor, its gigantic outline barely visible in the twilight dimness of the cave. You might have thought that Hercules, clad in the spoils of the Nemean lion, was before you. The bandit, for such he was, had just wakened from sound sleep, and still lay prone on the flinty pavement, *his huge limbs partly shrouded in the skin of*

some wild beast ; his girdle was stocked with knives and cutlasses, and a heavy truncheon was within reach of his right hand. Presently he raised his head, and supporting it on one arm, stared from under a mass of grizzled locks on the Bulbul. Nothing could exceed the uncouthness, the strength, nor, at first sight, the ferocity of his appearance. A second glance, however, showed him somewhat less repulsive ; and the captive, who had started to his feet, and hurriedly brushed away some blinding tears, thought he read in his eye a touch of human kindness. Encouraged by this, he showed no mistrust when the bandit laid a detaining hand upon his shoulder, and drew him roughly to his side.

‘Why this ado, stripling ?’ he growled forth in a dialect used by the Turcomans, and not unknown to the Bulbul. ‘Thou hast nought to fear ; the Crooked Serpent dares not bite thee !’

‘I fear not that,’ the boy answered proudly but sadly. ‘If I weep, it is not for myself, but for my brother, on whom the Crooked Serpent hath fixed his venomous tooth.’

‘Thy brother ?’ rejoined the bandit ; ‘who is he ?’ Then familiarly seizing a handful of the boy’s long bright hair, he added, ‘Ay, ay ! by these sunny locks, he must be the fair-skinned Northman, the hated of Hossein’s soul ! Ay, lad, he is a dead man indeed. Sooner will yonder foaming river turn back to the hills, than Hossein forego his purpose to slay !’

It was impossible not to be struck with the bitterness of his tone as he pronounced the last few words. The Bulbul conceived from it a sudden hope that this man might be wrought upon to assist towards the deliverance of Gawwyne ; he therefore let pass the insolent freedom used towards himself, and said, 'Is this Hossein thy friend ?'

A low chuckling laugh was the outlaw's reply. He sat up, clenched one hand, placed the other on the boy's shoulder with crushing force, then said 'As the wild vine bears down the oak, so has this man done to me. I had a carrack of mine own, the terror of the craven-hearted traders of Cyprus ; he has ta'en it from me, and manned it with pirates, whose deeds even *I* loathe ! I had six score bold outlaws at my back, that called me Captain ; he with his five hundred now lords it over them and me, offering us a share in their perils, but none in their spoil ! Shall I call this man my friend ? I tell thee, boy, till he came I was a prince among these fastnesses as much as thou—'

Rage choked his utterance, and the Bulbul, fearful of inflaming such wild passions, held his peace awhile ; then he said musingly, 'Thou also pratest to me of a crown ! Know that were I indeed a prince, instead of a nameless prisoner, I would give all my treasure to save this Northman.'

'Ay, sayest thou so ?' answered the bandit, now restored to a calmer mood. 'A goodly bargain, and one which many men would hold thee to ; but I

covet no lands, nor lordships, I! Freedom from this Hossein, and a honester trade, is all I desire; and if thou, pretty stripling, wilt swear to make me first headsman in thy father's realm, why, marry, I will venture life and limb to save thy brother?

The boy opened his blue eyes wide. 'My father? whence knowest thou him? who is he?' he asked with trembling eagerness; but the outlaw replied with a laugh, 'Bide thy time, and thou shalt know; meanwhile, swear to me that when thou comest to thy principedom and father's house, the office I covet shall be mine.'

'What? swear in the dark!' exclaimed the boy, with rising colour. 'Nay, that were to forswear myself, which, prince or starveling, I will never do!'

'True lion's cub!' the bandit answered. 'I trust thee the more that thy fair words are scanty. Now take my hand on't, for that I hate Hossein, and like thee well, I will seek to set this man free.'

The slight fingers of the captive were almost buried in the huge palm of his new friend and confederate; the heartiness of that grasp, albeit from so questionable a character, exhilarated him, and he asked joyously, 'Sir Outlaw, or by what name soever thou wouldest be called, what shall be my part in this adventure?'

‘Call me Leo,’ replied the brigand, ‘Leo the Carian; by that name am I known by land and sea. Thus much for thy first question. For the second, let me answer it by another. Canst meet danger?’

‘I trust in God I can,’ answered the boy, with kindling eye; ‘although mine evil hap has been to live in king’s courts delicately.’

‘That makes nothing against thee,’ rejoined Leo, with approving nod and caress; ‘eaglets scorn short flights, and trim their wings at once for the sun; but to the matter in hand. Craft must be met by craft; and there is a man I know of in this place, who though base and beggarly, may serve our ends.’

‘Where is he?’ inquired the Bulbul earnestly. ‘Lose not a moment in treating with him, for my brother’s jeopardy is great.’

‘He is a miserable Jew,’ replied Leo; ‘a leech, or wizard, or both, driven from the Christian camp at Damietta for some treacherous dealing with the Moslem. He, luckless wight, being captured by our carrack, thought to make Hossein his friend by revealing these to him; but he found himself deceived, for Hossein cried with a visage changed by fury, ‘What, art thou that Manasses, scholar of Leech Simeon, that ruined my fortunes? unriddling a letter I had written, and revealing its contents to John, the fiery king! Caitiff, thou shalt die!’ Never saw I man so undone as this Manasses; he grovelled

at Hossein's feet, declaring with tears that his terror, not his will, had consented to that act. Then Hossein, having made sport with his fears, as the tiger with the kid, vouchsafed him life, so he would enrol himself his servant. I do believe for that boon the man would have sworn fealty to Satan! He is thus our new captain's drudge and thrall, jeered at by all, beaten, compelled to eat swine's flesh, till his soul is weary of his life. He and I, being both minded to throw off this yoke, have entered into a sort of fellowship; and coward as he is, the man has a touch of wizardrie about him. He can at his will blind men's eyes, or root their feet to the earth, or cause strong linked chains to drop off their limbs!

The boy clapped his hands, exclaiming, 'That shall he do for my Gawyne straightway! but,' he added with less confidence, 'how shall we persuade him to do it?'

'Leave that to me,' replied the bandit, 'it will serve my ends not less than thine to set this thy brother free. When the hour of deliverance comes, he shall strike a lusty stroke in my behalf. Thou too, stripling, mayest flesh thy dagger in the breast of an Assassin, if thou wilt!'

'Would the hour were come!' responded the Bulbul; 'meanwhile we must part, Leo. I hear a stir without, and the voice of Hossein, and 'twere not well he found thee here. Away! and lose not a moment in this matter!'

‘Fear me not,’ said the outlaw ; ‘and thou, bold youngster, bridle thy hot haste, lest it bring us to ruin ; seek no further speech with me ; greet me not, if we should meet in the camp ; have no dealings with the Jew ; above all, meddle not with the Frank.’

With these parting injunctions the Bulbul’s grimly prepared to go. He made his exit not by the mouth of the cave, but by a natural arched passage at the further end of it, so low that a man could only traverse it on hands and knees. Leo again chuckled as he marked the boy’s surprise. ‘Ay, ay,’ he said, ‘Hossein boasts of his skill in court and camp lore, but of these ragged rocks he knows nothing. To-morrow we shall remove to a fastness called the Wolf’s Lair, full of strange holes and caves, and beshrew me if I let slip my advantage over him there.’

‘Stay a moment,’ said the boy, as the receding form was lost in darkness. ‘By what sign shall I know that my brother is free ?’

‘To-morrow night, when we kindle our watchfire, be thou there !’ replied Leo. ‘If I take a pine-branch and snap it against my knee thus, know that thy brother is at large.’

So saying, Leo disappeared. All the next day he, as well as Hossein, was absent on the marauding expedition before alluded to. Its ill success caused great discontent among the outlaws, and was attributed to the rivalry that existed between their old

captain and their new. Hossein, deeply mortified, swore in the presence of all that he would renew the attack next day, but that Leo should remain behind and guard the baggage. The Carian, seeing his party far outnumbered, was forced to bear this indignity. Silently and sullenly he joined the moonlight march to the Wolf's Lair, brooding as he went on the surest and quickest mode of revenge.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Ay, every inch a king.”—*Shakespeare.*

THAT night, replete with torment to De Boteler, was passed in outward calm by our pilgrims, among the ruins of Boudroum. All of them, save two, slept peacefully. Fra Angelo, whose mind turned incessantly to the fortunes of Alexios of Trebizonde, gave the still hours to prayer and cogitation. Rosamond also spent them unrestfully; even in slumber her heart was waking, and she continually started at the call of some imaginary voice or vision. Her fancy, already stretched on the rack by Gawyne's doubtful fate, was further excited by the romantic incidents of the journey, and by Massimo's narrative touching the grand Komnenos and his lost child. Those who think with the poet, that ‘when Heaven sends sorrow warnings go first,’ may believe, if they will, that Rosamond's deep unrest was coincident with the most perilous crisis of De Boteler's life. Nor would they err in this conclusion, however mistaken, possibly, in the reasonings which led up to it.

Scarcely had the first flush of dawn pencilled the sky, when the Iconiote officers set about their

investigation of our pilgrims' baggage. Sir Richard, refreshed by six hours' sleep, bore this infliction with more philosophy than could have been anticipated ; and to say the truth the Moslems fulfilled their thankless office rather courteously than otherwise.

After watching over the safety of his effects, and paying a moderate toll, the knight returned to his quarters. He whose stately presence overawed the Soldan's officers, stole noiselessly toward his sleeping daughter's couch. He stooped over her with womanly tenderness, and observed wistfully her heavy eyelids and blue-veined temples. 'Child, child,' he murmured, 'I do arraign thee for a most loving hypocrite. Whence the smiles and bright auguries, by which thou dost deceive thine old father? In sleep (as in wine, men say) is truth ; and now I read thy heart's secret on that sad brow and those pale parted lips! So looked thy mother on her funeral bier.' He turned abruptly away, and busied himself in relighting the extinguished fire, moving to and fro as carefully as though he trod the nine red-hot ploughshares of the ordeal. Massimo had brought a store of resinous fir-wood universally used in Asia Minor both for fuel and candle. A splinter of it wedged between two stones served the latter purpose, and would frequently burn with a large flame and black smoke for nearly an hour. On this occasion it served also to kindle a blaze, which crackled, and flickered cheerily on the ancient vault, and threw a glow over

Rosamond's colourless features. Still she did not wake, for sleep, with a perversity it not unfrequently displays, had scarce begun to seal her eyelids down, when it was time for them to re-open. The morning sky was grey and thick (how unlike the sun-risings of Natolia!) and no brightness relieved its leaden hue except an angry streak of crimson in the north. A keen wind whistled mournfully through every crevice, as though foretelling hardship and woe to the wayfarers.

It was hard to recall the maiden to such a world as this; Sir Richard delayed doing so, till the rude note of a horn blown every morning about sunrise, proclaimed that in another hour the procession would begin its march. Then he waked her with a kiss and blessing; the soft smiling eyes met his, and in their light the dreariness without was forgotten. Tita meanwhile had sallied forth with one of the classical narrow-necked pitchers of the country in her hand, in search of goat's milk. The bleating of that animal, a pleasant and familiar sound, had aroused her at peep of day; its milk, though distasteful to modern palates, was then esteemed a luxury, and the zealous handmaiden was resolved to procure some for her lady's breakfast. She found the goatherds milking their flocks on a knoll sprinkled with ancient ruins. There many a richly carved sarcophagus still stood, its classical ornaments of mask, lion's head, or shield, proclaiming its purely Greek origin. A few Christian columns were also

sprinkled about, known by the olive branch, or Agnus Dei, inscribed upon them.

Little heeding these marvels of antiquity, Tita bent her whole powers to achieve a successful bargain with the rude peasants of Boudroum ; the bribe of a minute silver coin detached from one of her raven plaits, prevailed ; she became the triumphant possessor of a foaming pitcher of new milk, and of a large flat cake made of pure wheat, but much resembling in appearance the oat-cake of Westmoreland. These she carried back, with the aid of the galley-master, who espied her as he stood on a cliff watching the signs of the weather, and leaping from point to point of the pumice rock, was quickly at her side.

‘What cheer, Massimo?’ she asked, seeing his brow cloudy.

‘But indifferent,’ he replied thoughtfully. ‘Yon red streak in the eye of morning bodes foul weather, and from that hill I noted a fresh sprinkling of snow on the higher ranges, most likely the harbinger of more to-night ; we must push on this day, if we would reach Attalia to-morrow.’

‘Go thy brother and his company with us?’ inquired Tita, catching something of her lover’s disquietude. ‘They, doubtless, are acquainted with these mountain gorges, and could guide us through them.’

‘They have been long gone, *carina*,’ he answered ; they tarried but two hours to refresh their beasts, then spurred forward by moonlight to Boojak, eight leagues south ; there the Lord Alexios commanded

them to meet him and the most noble Irene, and strengthen their escort to Attalia. They will reach that town many hours before us, being cumbered with little baggage, and mounted on the swiftest horses of their country.'

'I would we were well at our journey's end,' sighed Tita. 'I like not these cold blasts, nor the rough paces of the mules; yonder hills before us look frowningly, and the snow on their sides freezes my blood like the sight of a shroud. Say where and under whose protection shall we tarry to-night?'

'Under the best of protection,' answered Massimo, 'if we do but reach it, that of our Venice.' He laid strong emphasis on the word 'our,' and glanced towards her with a momentary gleam of mirth on his bronzed features; he was not disappointed of the saucy rejoinder which that pronoun, when applied to Venice, never failed to elicit.

Our Venice, forsooth? talk you, Messer, of our Venice to a Samiote girl! Bembè! our mud, our fogs, our frogs, you should say rather; for which of these, I pray you, am I to give up my beautiful Samos? She paused for lack of breath; and the galley-master replied, laughing,

'I would our mules had the speed of thy tongue, then might we reach the Venetian fort,* over against

* The ruins of this and other castles may yet be seen in the Taurian range, north of Attalia. They were erected by the Venetians for the safety of caravans travelling between that port and Smyrna.

Attalia, ere one ' could cry 'alarm !' Speedily relapsing into his former gravity, however, he added, 'Tita, my life, thou hast made a coward of me. Once on a time, neither driving snows, nor Carian robbers, could have caused me a pang, save of impatience to grapple with them ; and now—*ah, donne, donniciuole !* ye were created to be our bane and incumbrance !'

'So spake the elm to the green grape-vine that clothed its ruggedness !' cried Tita, clasping both hands on the galley-master's shoulder. She spoke in jest, but her brown cheek had turned pale, and she continued presently, 'You spoke of robbers just now ; tell me frankly, has not that same Venetian garrison you bragged of, dispersed the robber gangs of this district ? My uncle, the usurer, said in my hearing a while back, that, thanks to Venice, he could send sealed money-bags from Smyrna to Attalia without a qualm.'

'And for once the old fox spoke truth,' answered Massimo, more cheerfully. 'Twas but a wandering report, Tita, brought by an Attalian trader, last night ; he said that a handful of cursed Assassins had landed even now on this coast, and betaken themselves to the mountains, there making common cause with the skulking thieves of the country. Some deeds of violence they doubtless have committed ; but our Commandant Gradenigo is a match for them, and has already hanged half a score to his battlements. Nay, look not pale, little one ; the

Komnenos, with his strong guard armed to the teeth, is on before, and will clear the way for us ; we have thirty stout fellows of our own company ; the pilgrim knight will strike a lusty blow, if needed, for Saint George and the Dragon !

‘And Messer Marino for Saint Mark and *our* Venice !’ rejoined the provoking Tita, then sped down the hill without waiting a reply from her lover.

The report brought by the Attalian trader was discussed in a council, composed of the heads of the caravan. Fra Angelo examined him in their presence with great acuteness and patience : he proved to be ‘a mere vapouring fellow,’ as Sir Richard observed, ‘one whose love of tattling doubled, like voice and echo, the number of the foe ;’ his evidence, therefore, did not meet with all the attention which it perhaps deserved. A few timid wights, afraid rather of ill weather than of brigands, resolved to travel round by the plain of Iconium, under the escort of their new Moslem allies. The rest having looked to their weapons, and to the shoeing of their animals, broke their fast, and prepared for departure.

The road led for an hour or two across an elevated and dreary region, where scarcely any vegetation was to be seen. After a while, they caught glimpses of sheltered valleys, where the wheat was putting up its tender blade ; the distant mountains too began to be clothed with foliage, and by degrees the ‘long

backs of the bushless downs' were exchanged for a wood, or wilderness of shrubs, intermingled with rock ; their horses' feet crushed the sweet grape-hyacinth at every step.

Now they leave the open country, and mountains shut them in on all sides. Snow-topped peaks rise in front of them, their silver horns glittering against the grey and loaded sky ; their bases are clothed with rich vegetation, walnuts and pines, and an underwood of laurel and arbutus ; around, or over these, climbs an aspiring growth of clematis and wild vine, in many places crushing them down into a thicket of vegetation, impervious except to birds and squirrels ; its green masses gleam here and there through a veil of new-fallen snow.

In spite of a keen though variable wind, and of occasional snow showers, our pilgrims pushed on with greater rapidity than on any previous day. They halted but once, near an encampment of Yourooks, the wandering inhabitants of that region, who brought them bread, water, cream, and provender for their beasts. The women, seeing their escort vigilant and anxious, did not venture to complain of this forced march ; and Don Marino, who first grumbled, and then protested loudly, was treated with complete disregard. Late in the day the roar of water became distinctly audible, and the rapid river, known to the ancients by the name of Catarractes, became visible, and for a league or more accompanied their path, flowing now to the right hand, now to the left.

They crossed it by rude bridges, composed of pine trunks laid side by side.

No human being now crossed their path ; these mountain gorges, which six weeks later the most luxuriant vegetation would clothe, making them the resort of hundreds of Pamphylian shepherds, were now cheerless and savage in aspect. Winter had made much havoc, and trees and fragments of rock loosened by the snow above, cumbered the track in many places. It was now covered with an additional thick coating of snow, so that Massimo looked in vain for the footprints of the royal cavalcade, which he believed was in their van.

Evening closed in, and the hour which brought a soft lustrous twilight to the shore of the blue Egean, fell cold and dusky here. An icy wind cut through our travellers, and froze the damp garments which clung to them. It rushed through the narrow pass as through a funnel, its wings laden with thick whirling snow ; the experienced guides of the caravan owned that seldom had they encountered weather so untoward, and exhorted such of the party as were not so fortunate as to be mounted on mules, to proceed warily, lest their weary beasts should stumble, and precipitate them into the torrent. To this caution, however, was added the consolatory assurance that Fort Gradenigo was within half a league of the spot they had now reached. This intelligence flew like wildfire through the procession, cheering many a desponding heart ; even Don Marino re-

vived, when he learnt that the next winding of the pass would bring them in view of that desired haven ; his meditations, which had hitherto borne the same complexion as those of Touchstone : ‘ Now am I in Arden ; the more fool I ! when I was at home I was in a better place ; ’ now assumed a livelier cast at the near prospect of supper, and of a carouse with Gradenigo, a roystering gallant as reckless in dicing and drinking as in his pursuit of the Carian bandits.

‘ There is many a slip ’twixt cup and lip,’ as thou, poor Marinaccio, shalt presently experience.

If Marino displayed the spirit of Touchstone, the galley-master acted on the maxim of Touchstone’s fellow-traveller, that ‘ doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat.’ His utmost efforts were to ‘ comfort the weaker vessel,’ for Tita had neither the natural nor the pilgrim spirit to support her in circumstances so trying. The matron who had shared her awning in the earlier part of the journey, had tarried behind at Eski Hissar ; and the awning itself had been discarded as unfit for windy or wet weather. Massimo had substituted for it his own bear’s-skin cloak and hood, but in spite of this protection, the inclemency of the day was bitterly felt by her.

‘ Alack,’ said she to Rosamond, ‘ I would I had your patience, Madonna ; but this grey sunless climate is killing. In my own dear Samos, I have seen the hills capped with snow at Christmas tide ;

but ah, that was as different from this ceaseless drift, as the hug of an angry bear is from the touch of this mantle made of his skin !

‘Alas, poor heart !’ said Rosamond ; ‘as little fitted for this rude blast, as the bright-eyed lizard that basks in the sun of Natolia ; I, that come from the churlish north, can scarcely abide its fury ; but cheer up. Listen to yon holy friar, chanting psalms as his bare feet tread the snow ; hark, he sings, “Praise the Lord upon earth, ye dragons and all deeps ; fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, fulfilling His word.” I do think his voice pierces the skies ; for see, they open, and lo, one ray of brightness struggles through !’

Rosamond stopped abruptly, for as she gazed upward, she thought she discerned on the edge of the cliff to their right, a swarm of moving dark figures. The very pulsation of her heart ceased for a moment ; happily, she had power left to check the cry which was upon her lips, and then the reassuring thought followed, that the river, deep and strong, flowed between them and her company. For worlds she would not have imparted her suspicions to Tita, whose terrified imagination had for the last four hours conjured up a bandit in every brake ; but the galley-master was made of sterner stuff, she would seek him out !

At that moment he rode by, drawing rein in order to point out to Tita the brightening sky. Those bronzed features, relieved by the bright black eyes

and glittering teeth, were her sunshine ; and she raised her head from its drooping position, as he said, 'Patience, little one, we are in port now !'

Massimo's brow grew dark, as a few minutes later he followed with his eye the direction of Rosamond's uplifted finger, and detected the objects of her fear skulking among some scattered pine-trees. '*Per Bacco*,' he muttered ; 'they must be bandits, for no true men would adventure themselves on the summit of the cliff in this twilight ! Yet 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange ; never yet has robber made his way beyond Fort Gradenigo ; no, not that dare-devil, Leo the Carian himself ! If these are children of that evil brood, (as much I think they are,) some desperado must be at their head, perchance the Assassin we heard of. I'll spur on, and look to the bridge ; Heaven send they have not cut it away, for 'twould be two hours' work to throw another over the ravine !'

Thus soliloquising, the galley-master spurred his weary beast up the steep ascent that led in winding fashion to the bridge before-named. Sir Richard joined him, and the rest followed with what speed they might, unconscious, however, (save Rosamond,) of the newly-discovered cause for anxiety. A sudden turning in the path brought before their eyes a scene of such grandeur and sublimity as beggars description.

On their right thundered the torrent, cliffs rising perpendicularly from its further bank ; their summits were crowned with snow-laden pines, whose stems looked inky black by contrast. On the left the pass

widened a little, forming a kind of amphitheatre of rock, pierced with a succession of natural caves. The track wound under this wall of rock and by the mouths of the caves, ascending till it reached a high point, where from time immemorial, a bridge had spanned the torrent. Four hundred yards further stood the fort, one of those slightly built Venetian edifices, the ruins of which are still distinguishable by their three-cornered battlements. On each side of the river, several waterfalls, of no great volume, but of exquisite beauty, were seen and heard dashing down the cliffs; those on the left hand hurried across the road, as though in haste to mingle their crystal streams with the turbid waters of the river. The feathery snow had ceased to fall, and the cloud-masses had broken up; a thin haze, which sparkled like silver, filled the lower air, and suddenly a vivid fiery glow was seen above, lighting up the mid-heaven and bathing snow and cliffs and ragged trees in crimson light; each cascade caught the reflection, which turned its clouds of spray into fiery showers. It was one of those effects which travellers in mountain scenery not unfrequently witness soon after the sun has set; but to our unaccustomed pilgrims it bore almost a magical character, and not a few, as they stood beholding, crossed themselves in awe and wonder.

The thrilling interest of this scene was heightened by the living objects which gave it animation. A fire was burning within the largest of the caverns,

and a group of henchmen of soldierly appearance, stood at its mouth, as though keeping watch over some person of consequence. The galley-master bowed low as he passed the spot, then said in a subdued voice to Sir Richard, 'These are the body-guard of the most illustrious Irene; no doubt her Highness is sheltered within yonder cave, and the prince, her son, with her.'

One keen glance at the equipments of the men was the knight's only reply; and he pressed on towards the crest of the ridge, intensely anxious to ascertain whether the bridge were still there. 'It is gone,' said Massimo; 'an enemy has done this.'

Yes, here was clear evidence that the bandits were at hand, evidence too of their being in considerable numbers and full of audacity. Hitherto their range had been limited to the southern side of the Taurian range, and the Venetian garrisons had kept them in check, so that caravans were never molested north of the chain of forts, of which Gradenigo commanded one. Strong additional escorts always waited at these forts to guard travellers down to the Attalian plain. A band of armed men had been bespoken for this purpose by our caravan; where were they now? Why had they not pressed on to meet and defend their important charge? Had neglect or cowardice kept them away? or had they encountered the outlaws, and been driven back?

Such were the confused conjectures which whirled through the galley-master's brain, ending, however,

in the triumphant exclamation, 'Now praised be blessed Mark, who has raised up defenders at this pinch for our helpless women ; look, excellency, look ; yonder stands the matchless Trebizonde archers of the Grand Prince ; he himself must be near !'

Sir Richard's eye was already fixed on those splendid men in delight and admiration ; about fifty of them were drawn up in compact order by the river side ; they were equipped in buff jerkins, and caps lined with iron ; a small oval shield was attached to one arm ; their bows were ready strung, and their faces turned in the direction of danger ; none moved or looked round when the caravan came in sight.

A party of men, guarded by these archers, was engaged in cutting down some fir-trees that grew on a knoll over the river brink ; it was a perilous task, as they were necessarily exposed to the javelins or arrows of enemies lurking on the opposite side of the torrent. They plied it cheerfully, however, and the rocks rang with their regular and rapid strokes. The secret of this zeal and energy soon became apparent.

Foremost among the wood-cutters stood one of unusual height and regal bearing. The Komnenos (for it was he) had thrown off his short cloak in order to deal more vigorous blows on the red trunk of a noble fir, the king of the group. So engrossed was he in the work, that Sir Richard had time to scan him unobserved, and to wonder at the exquisite symmetry

of his frame, and the lightness combined with vigour, that characterized each movement: Nor were the features of Alexios the Faithful less remarkable; such was their regularity and delicacy, that he might have been deemed a 'a breathing statue of immortal Greece;' yet the short finely-cut upper lip, the dark grey eye shaded by long lashes, and the proud turn of the small head, were full of expression. His clear brown cheek was now flushed by severe exertion, but faded into paleness when he paused, as he occasionally did, to cast a searching glance around; his hair, of a deep auburn slightly touched with grey, flowed in waves over his shoulders; he wore a small steel cap with a purple scarf wreathed round it, and in front the effigy of Saint Eugenios engraved on a golden oval; a shawl girdle, likewise of the rich deep blue, called imperial purple, confined his white tunic, and was filled with glittering weapons.

Sir Richard was used to courts, not only to the diminutive court of Earl Randle, but to the more stately gatherings of French or English barons round their respective monarchs. He was, moreover, of a calm unenthusiastic temper, yet the sight of this hapless and all but discrowned prince moved him to deeper feelings of respect and sympathy than he had thought himself capable of. They were visible in his countenance and demeanour, as he doffed his bonnet and bent low before Alexios. The prince returned his courtesy, then beckoned a henchman, and said to him in Greek, ' Marcos, there are women in

yonder company, wet and way-worn ; inform the princess of their coming, and their need of warmth and shelter.'

Marcos obeyed, and the royal wood-cutter resumed his labours ; a sufficient number of trees for the erection of the new bridge was soon felled, and it only remained to transport them to the spot where the torrent was to be spanned.

Night stole over the pass ; the sunset splendours vanished ; cold grey shadows stole upward from the chasm, and finally extinguished every sparkle on the snow-peaks above, leaving them dead-white, and ghost-like. There was a pause in the work, and the prince ordered one of his men to bring a lighted splinter of pine-wood, to serve as a torch while they completed it ; but Sir Richard, waiving ceremony, suggested a different course : ' Under your Highness's favour,' he asked, mustering for his purpose his best Norman French, ' is it wise to lay down our bridge three hours at least before it can be possible to cross over it ? Not even your gallant train can fare forward through this winding and perilous valley, till the friendly moon gives her light ; and that will not be till some while after midnight. Were it not better to rest now, and return to our work when the moon is up ? Thus shall our bridge escape the risk of being marred, as soon as made, by crafty foes, if any such lurk near.'

After some discussion the suggestion was adopted by Alexios and the little knot of officers who com-

posed his council. In order that Gradenigo and his garrison might know of their approach, they ordered Marcos, the henchman, (a Venetian, and brother of our galley-master,) to blow a few notes on his horn. He gave forth the simple air of a barcarole as old as Venice itself; then there was a pause, all present waiting for some reply from the fort. None came; but echo took up the melody instead, and cliff after cliff gave it back, each repetition being fainter than the last. At length it died away, and most of the listeners whom its unearthly sweetness had riveted to the spot, returned either to their cave or watch-fire to take some repose. The Trebizonde archers were dismissed, all but a certain number, whose duty it was to keep watch; the Grand Prince himself took charge of them, saying to a grey-headed officer, who remonstrated with him for incurring this fresh fatigue, ‘Let me alone, Giorgios! yet three days, and the riddle whether my son live or no, shall be made plain. Till then, toil is better than sleep; dreams but mock me, bringing up his image fair and unchanged.’

‘God send the dream prove true,’ answered the chamberlain bluntly; ‘but this Hossein, this Assassin, is a crafty fiend; I doubt he palters with your highness in some double sense; mayhap, is even now luring you to destruction.’

‘I think not,’ replied the Komnenos; ‘when Ismael Bey, father of the mountain prince I slew, died four years back, the lust of vengeance died with

him ; lust of gold now sways this Hossein, and he would lose, not gain, by slaying me.'

As Alexios spoke, there was a rustling among the snow-clad bushes that clothed the further brink of the river ; a javelin hissed through the dusky air, and struck a tree that grew hard by ; it vibrated a moment, then remained fixed in the bark : the prince and his officer looked on one another for a moment without speaking.

'In the name of Mithras, and all evil powers, what have we here?' exclaimed the old chamberlain, pulling out the lance, and with it a glittering object that hung from it.'

'It is my son's baldric,' answered the Komnenos, struggling to be calm, yet trembling from head to foot ; 'give it to me, Giorgios, and speak not of this matter to the child's mother ; now go thy way, for perhaps if I tarry alone he will speak to me.'

'He ? who ?' cried the chamberlain, 'frighted from his propriety' by the thought of danger threatening his lord. 'My liege, my liege, tarry not here, I do conjure you ; think of the lady Irene, of the poor witless prince, who could not love you better were he a second Solomon ; think of the realm, orphaned indeed if it loses you.'

He paused, and drew a long breath.

'I think of all, replied the Komnenos gently ; 'and (which avails more) God and Saint Eugenios think of them also ; but, my father, thy fears bewray thy reason ; he whose hand aimed this dart is scarce

ten shafts' length from us, and might have pierced thee or me had he so desired ; his intent therefore cannot be murderous, nor this dear trinket other than an augury of hope ; leave me then without misgiving.'

The chamberlain obeyed, shaking his grey head, and pondering much over this strange and mysterious occurrence ; he resolved to remain as near his master as possible, and therefore joined himself to Sir Richard Fytton, who was keeping watch a little space below the crest of the ridge. The knight courteously made way for him ; and such amicable communication passed between them, as their almost total ignorance of one another's language would permit.

Meanwhile, the Komnenos kept his lonely vigil, listening with unnaturally sharpened ear to every sound, and stooping over the chasm from time to time to see if any light or any human form might be discerned. But he watched in vain ; 'there was no voice, nor any that spake, nor any that regarded ;' Nature alone spoke, in the ceaseless music of rushing waters, and the hollow rumbling of landslips far off among the gorges. Thus wore away the first hours of night ; and presently above a wall of crags rose

' the wand'ring moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that hath been led astray,
Through the heaven's wide pathless way.'

Never was her appearance more joyfully welcomed

than by the Grand Prince, whose burning impatience to set forward had almost mastered his self-control. His officers needed no summons, for devotion to their master, no less than the sense of danger, gave them wings. The Cheshire knight lent effectual aid, and in short space a sufficient number of pine trunks were laid across the current, and lashed firmly together. The rude bridge was tested by many eager feet, and pronounced secure both for man and beast.

It now only remained to marshal the procession. A Smyrneote merchant, an old white-bearded man, with shrewd eye and wrinkled forehead, came forward, and thus addressed Alexios in his own name and that of his fellows: 'Be pleased, dread Prince, to hearken to our prayer, and suffer us poor traders, with our women, our beasts, and our merchandise, to proceed hence under the shadow of your protection. It is true we have stout hearts and hands amongst our company, yet we fear they would be greatly outnumbered by the outlaws that ambush in these passes; the unwonted boldness of the same in venturing thus far, and the ill-boding silence of our defenders in Fort Gradenigo, make our hearts fail for fear, the which, dread lord, one word from **your** lips can remove.'

As the speaker preferred this request, a murmur of dissatisfaction ran through the small band of nobles grouped round 'their sovereign. The men of Trebizonde held all subjects of the Nicean empire in special aversion; nor had the pursuit of commerce as

yet found favour in their eyes, though Alexios with truly enlightened policy, spared no effort for its encouragement. They therefore received with small joy a proposition which hampered them with much heavy baggage, and many incapable persons. The Grand Prince, for obvious reasons, shared their reluctance, and for a moment chafed inwardly at this unlooked-for clog upon his movements; but a nobler impulse triumphed, and he made answer, 'Your desire, Sirs, is granted, and your safety and that of your women shall be tendered by us as our own; for your stuff, that also shall be our care, so far as may consist with matters of deep concernment which have brought us hither; more, if you are true men, you will not ask.'

This promise appeared to satisfy the Smyrneotes. They retired, the old merchant whispering in the chamberlain's ear, 'But that your lord's aspect daunted me somewhat, I would have said that the tenth of our merchandise shall be his, if we and it reach Attalia unscathed.'

'Then hadst thou spoken very foolishly,' replied the grizzly veteran, with undisguised contempt. 'Thinkest thou that our lord is to be bargained with like a Jew pedlar?'

The heads of the caravan were now summoned to receive Alexios's commands; the disposition of his small force was of necessity complicated by the addition of eighty or ninety persons, most of them unwarlike, to his train; he, however, ordered all for

the march with great precision and celerity, placing his own bowmen in the van, and entrusting to Sir Richard the command of all the able-bodied men attached to the caravan. These numbered about thirty, and were well armed, and in good heart. The non-fighting portion of the little community were placed on the side nearest the cliff, which, after crossing the torrent, would be to their right. They were to be flanked by Sir Richard's men, and by twenty royal henchmen under Giorgios the chamberlain ; another body of archers brought up the rear.

A post of some trust had been offered by Alexios to Don Marino ; he excused himself, however, bidding the reluctant galley-master inform his highness, 'that sharp cramps born of the nipping cold, compelled him for that day to play the woman.' The message excited a burst of derisive mirth amongst the Trebizonde veterans ; and Rosamond, who was once more mounted and at her father's side, could not forbear exclaiming, 'Ah, poor our sex, to be so vilely compared !'

The three hours' halt caused by the destruction of the bridge, had proved very beneficial to Rosamond. She had dismounted, cold, weary, and faint ; Massimo, her usual helper, was not at hand ; and the fire which he had lighted, had been instantly closed round by a clamorous swarm, eager to dry their garments, or dress their food, and as selfish as cold and hungry travellers usually are on such occasions. At another time Tita would have asserted

her rights and her lady's to a share in the cheering blaze, both by word and elbow-thrust; but at this moment she was even more exhausted than Rosamond, and her spirits wholly dashed by the unlooked-for delay in reaching Fort Gradenigo. Such was the comfortless position of the maidens when they were accosted by the Trebizonde henchman named Marcos. He was, as we have said, brother to the galley-master, and therefore no stranger to the name and fortunes of our pilgrims. He approached the English lady with respect, and bade her on the part of the Princess of Trebizonde, partake of such poor fare as that wild place afforded. He prayed her to suffer him to lead the way, and intimated by a sign that the little Samiote was to follow.

It was not without a thrill of interest that Rosamond, weary and travel-stained as she was, entered the presence of Irene the Fair. That lady, clothed in mourning weeds, sat on the ground, or rather on an embroidered carpet, whose rich colouring contrasted with the dark folds of her robe. Two female attendants sat behind her: by her side was a tall slight boy, whose exquisite beauty showed what his mother's faded loveliness must once have been. A large wax candle, enclosed in the graceful paper lantern of the east, threw its light on mother and son, and showed them engaged in the oriental game of "schah," now called chess. The boy's whole attention was centred upon it, and low inarticulate murmurs of pleasure or anxiety passed his lips, while

his slender fingers wandered irresolutely amongst the quaintly carved ivory pieces. His ear being sealed to outward sounds, he was unconscious of the pilgrims' entrance ; but when his mother rose to greet them, he rose too, and gazed on the strangers with timid but not unpleased curiosity.


Rosamond approached the princess with the customary homage of lip and knee ; the lady, however, raised her up, and with her own hands unclasped the dripping mantle which clung to her shoulders. She bade her attendants replace it with one of Angora wool ; then perceiving the embroidered cross on the white tunic, bent down and kissed the sacred emblem. She next performed the same offices for the abashed Tita, signing meanwhile to her women to prepare refreshments for the travellers.

All this was done in silence, and with a tender grace and simplicity, as though ministering to others were an instinct rather than a duty. Rosamond took the place pointed out by the princess, next to herself ; and a brief dialogue in broken Italian was attempted between them, but with little success on the part of Irene. She shook her head, saying hesitatingly, ' Alas, I have forgot that melodious tongue ; yet I knew it once, and should know it still ; for was not the race of Komnenos cradled in Italy ?'

Venison and bread, and a drink compounded of fragrant herbs and spices, were now made ready for the pilgrims. Tita had glided into the background, and was once more in her element, discoursing sotto-

voce, but with great volubility, with the royal suite. Meanwhile Prince Joannes, encouraged by a glance from his mother, rose, and taking his instructions from her gentle eye, helped her to minister to the pilgrim guest. As Irene watched him, an expression of mournful pride beamed in her large and lustrous eyes ; it gave animation to a brow and lip exquisitely formed, but telling rather of goodness than of high intelligence ; for hers was the cast of beauty, which often so powerfully attracts men of heroic mould : candour, sweetness, ready submission, spoke in every look and gesture ; variety of thought and energy of purpose were not there ; perhaps their presence might have rather marred than added to the charm of that faultless face.

The blast of Marcos' horn was succeeded by a period of silence and darkness. The Grand Prince durst not hazard even a moment's interview with Irene, lest his agitation should betray itself ; he contented himself with sending repeated messages that all was well, and repeated injunctions to her to lie down and rest. These she obeyed, after preparing with her own hands a couch for her boy, and suspending a small image of Saint Eugenios over his pallet.

Rosamond, courteously pressed by the princess to remain in that guarded abode, gladly did so. One glimpse of her father sharing the chamberlain's watch-fire set her heart at ease ; and after brief  prison, she folded her cloak round her, and sank into

a sleep as profound as ever had visited her pillow in the manor-house of Fulshawe. Images of beauty, most refined and ethereal, met her waking eye, three hours later ; the lantern was burning still, but bright sharply-defined patches of moonlight came in at the cave's mouth, and flouted its dim light. The silver gleam fell on Prince Joannes' sleeping face ; the princess knelt beside him, absorbed in grief or in devotion ; large tears were stealing down her cheeks, and the whispered words, 'Manuel, my child—our child—save him, restore him,' escaped her lips more than once ; so prayed the bereaved mother in the still watches of night, deeming herself alone.

Now all became stir and activity ; the horn was wound once more. Two palfreys of great beauty and strength were led forth, and Marcos was despatched to inform the princess Irene that all was in readiness for departure. The prince, as his custom was, waited to place her in her saddle. Once more in repose, his features had unconsciously resumed their cast of melancholy thought, and looked stern and statue-like in the moonlight. He roused himself from a momentary fit of abstraction, and beckoning Sir Richard near, said, 'Sir knight, our trusted chaplain is left at Boujak sick, and his deacon tarried behind to minister to him ; say, have you of your company any reverend priestly man to lift the hand of benediction over this new-made bridge ?'

'We have such an one, your Grace,' replied the knight ; 'a holy Latin friar, from Pisa, in Italy!'

‘From Pisa!’ rejoined Alexios thoughtfully. ‘Once—but let that pass. Sir knight, of your courtesy, obtain for us straightway the ghostly offices of this same friar.’

Fra Angelo was busily engaged amongst his fellow-travellers, and in their service, when the summons of the Komnenos reached him. Many bickerings had broken out amongst the traders attached to the caravan, and these by one consent were referred to him as umpire. In the spirit of the divine words, ‘Who made me a judge or a divider over you?’ he strove to restore peace rather by striking at the root of covetousness or pride, than by analyzing the paltry details of their bickerings and unfair dealings; and his success in many cases exceeded his hopes. Hard greedy men wept as he pleaded with them; some indeed slunk away; but others were permanently softened, and either forgave their debtors, or restored fourfold their doubtful gains. A sense of impending danger now weighed on the minds of all, and the last two hours had been spent by Angelo in exhorting, comforting, and strengthening a throng of penitents.

‘Such mercy is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.’

So he felt when Sir Richard Fytton came to summon him abruptly into the presence of Komnenos; the meeting which afar off he had dreaded, lost its terrors; painful memories were swallowed up in the presence of present mercies, and of the higher

and more blessed vocation to which by thorny paths he had been led. A joy, deep and subdued, took possession of him, and quickened his step as he accompanied the knight to the place of rendezvous. The Grand Prince advanced to meet them with uncovered head.

‘Holy Friar,’ he said, in those deep full tones, which in battle and council-chamber inspired awe and confidence, ‘we thank thee for this charity ; thy blessing shall avail much on a journey which, well thou know’st is cross and full of risk ; speak it, therefore, at once !’

Fra Angelo bent his head in token of acquiescence ; then advancing to the centre of the bridge, sprinkled it, according to the usage of the time, with a few drops of holy water. ‘We consecrate thee,’ he said aloud, ‘to the glory of God, and the service of man, in the name of the most Holy Trinity, and of blessed Eugenios the martyr.’ Then taking his place at the head of the long procession, he led the way southward down a precipitous descent, chanting, “Our help cometh of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth.” This rite duly performed, the friar prepared to resume his wonted place in the motley crowd ; as they filed by, he stood on one side, between them and the precipice, with uplifted hand, in the act of blessing. Alexios and Irene looked on one another, then on the tall form and pale serene features which a flood of moonlight revealed to them. As the prince led her palfrey down the steep pitch, she bent

forward tremblingly, and whispered, 'My Alexios, can it be? Is the friend of our youth given back to us at our sorest need? or is it his angel I see?'

'It is himself!' cried the Komnenos impetuously; and clasping one arm round his wife's slender waist, he lifted her from the saddle as if she had been a child; hand in hand they cast themselves at Angelo's feet, and kissed his hands and the hem of his garment without speaking.

Feelings too deep and various to be clothed in words, choked the friar's utterance for a moment; but he raised his eyes heavenward with a glance of the purest thankfulness; 'My son, my daughter,' he said, 'pride of former years—bright stars of my existence, that I deemed set to me for ever! oh, this is joy indeed!'

'Father,' replied the Komnenos in a broken voice, 'the heavens have looked darkly on our hearth and kingdom this many a day; now thou art come, now all is forgiven, they will bless.'

'I know not, my son,' the friar answered, 'nor may I guess, what issue is decreed for to-day's venture; but this I know, that armed with patience, and with each other's love, you will be strong to bear it; now, onward! and tarry not.'

He resumed his humble place in the caravan; and the Grand Prince, resigning Irene's bridle to Marcos, put himself at the head of his band, crying, 'Forward, in the name of God and His martyrs.'

All eyes turned towards the direction in which Fort Gradenigo stood, concealed by some intervening trees. The horrid report brought to our travellers at Boudroum, that Gradenigo had taken twelve bandits alive, and hanged them to the battlements, was generally believed, for such a proceeding was quite in accordance with that reckless commander's usual practice. The Carian bandits were hunted like wolves by every garrison in the Taurus, and as they showed no mercy, met with none ; and Gradenigo in one of his drinking bouts had been heard to vow that he would stock the Attalian market with outlaws' heads as it had never been stocked before ; in evil hour for himself, he fulfilled his boast.

A winding of the track brought our travellers close under the castle, which was built on a low wall of rock to their right. The snow had drifted high against its sides, which, being of the stone of the country, could hardly be distinguished from the cliff on which they stood, except by occasional arrow slits. A kind of causeway had been thrown up, forming a communication between the track and the castle gate. This was of oak, lined with iron, and behind it a strong grating had been placed to guard the ingress to the court-yard within ; but gate and grating both lay prostrate now, the one torn from its hinges, the other from its socket in the stone roof. All around were the hideous traces of a recent struggle, of spoil carried off, and blood shed like water. Not only corpses and broken weapons strewed the ground,

but evidences of luxury also—damask cushions, drinking vessels of Venetian glass, and the like.

There was a halt ; and after brief discussion, a party of armed men under Giorgios, the chamberlain, were detached to examine more nearly the state of matters in the keep. It was evident from the depth of untrodden snow which lay around that twelve hours or thereabouts had elapsed since the fatal affray. Profound silence reigned, disturbed only by the hoarse notes of scores of vultures, which rose to the wing as our travellers approached. Many of these repulsive creatures hovered over the battlements, from which, as the galley-master had already been informed, a row of lifeless bodies was suspended. The women of the caravan, sick at heart, did not raise their eyes to that ghastly spectacle ; even the men shrank from steadily regarding it, and when the Grand Prince did so, a smothered exclamation of horror escaped his lips. No Carian outlaws hung there now ; their bodies had been removed, and twelve bold gallants of the Venetian garrison substituted in their room ; and in the centre, over the gateway, was a thirteenth, whom, Marcos, shuddering, recognized by the length and thick masses of dark hair, as Gradenigo himself.

The company stood breathless for a moment ; then rose a cry for vengeance, in which the voice of Komnenos was foremost. Yet when he looked round on the shivering women and unwarlike men committed to his charge, and remembered that the

perpetrators of this dark act of reprisal must be near at hand glorying in their success, his strong arm was crippled. These helpless ones must be bestowed in some place of safety, before any other thought or project could be entertained for a moment.

A brief and cautious investigation proved that nothing breathing, whether friend or foe, remained within the fort. The enemy had been careful to destroy whatever provisions or stores it might have contained, and to render it wholly indefensible. That they themselves should have abandoned it was not surprising, for Marcos, who knew their habits well, described them as denizens of cave and forest, than even in the roughest blasts of winter, spurned the idea of being confined between walls of man's building. As he spoke he pointed with an ominous gesture towards the high and frowning peaks that rose in front of the travellers. '*Stanno li !*'* he muttered between his set teeth, in the accent of concentrated rage.

'Father, I am in a great strait,' said Alexios to Fra Angelo, as they parted after a hurried consultation ; 'the stars in their courses fight against us ; unwonted snows block our path ; these outlaws, who for fifteen years have not dared wag a finger, now burst forth in high-blown insolence ; and I—oh, Heaven !—how can I stir, while our child, our Manuel, is in their hands ? pray for us, father, for

* They are *there*.

there cannot be in death a pinch more sharp than this !'

'Is the Lord's hand shortened, that it cannot save ?' replied the friar solemnly. The words acted like a spell on the 'faithful Alexios ;' and wringing Angelo's hand, he addressed himself with fresh vigour to his work. It would have been worse than useless to tarry in this blood-stained and now untenable position ; turning back was equally impossible ; nothing remained, therefore, but to push forward to the next fort, which was only two leagues further, and actually in sight of Attalia and the Mediterranean ; here, probably, the remnant of Gradenigo's ill-fated garrison had taken refuge, and here our travellers, at least the weaker portion of them, might find the refreshment and repose of which a series of untoward circumstances had hitherto deprived them. The signal for departure was therefore given, and in a short time the caravan had resumed its march. Fra Angelo, and a party of armed men under Marcos, were employed to the last moment in taking down the corpses of Gradenigo and his followers, and laying them, until such time as they might be Christianly buried, in a chamber of the castle, where the birds of the air might not rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. They then hastened forward to rejoin the procession.

It moved along, compact and silent, the men looking to their arms, the women looking to the men for courage and hope. The gentle Irene, her heart

full of wifely trust and mother's love, never dreamed of wishing herself in a place of safety, unless all she loved and lived for might be with her there. Rosamond, far more imaginative, and therefore keenly alive to the perils they ran and might run, sought, by the friar's advice, to quell her own apprehensions in soothing those of others ; many drank in comfort from her eye and smile ; and Tita, who, to use her own phrase, ' had shown herself scarcely less pigeon-livered than Don Marino himself,' now began to spy a hope of ultimate safety.

The severity of the weather had within the last few hours wonderfully abated ; it seemed as if that fierce onslaught of hail and snow had exhausted the rage of winter, and now spring asserted her claim ; a soft and lazy air from the south succeeded the pitiless northern blast, and brought no small relief to our feebler pilgrims.

One bad effect of the April warmth, however, speedily made itself felt, for the snow, hitherto hard and crisp, became soft and yielding, to the great discomfort of the pedestrians, and likewise of the four-footed part of the community. In spite of this drawback, the travellers fared forward ; their slow march wound under the unvarying cliff to their right, now higher, now lower, but never broken ; the torrent flowed on to their left, sometimes noisy and furious, sometimes calmer for a space, but never absent. If it be true that ' monotony is pain,' that evil was added to the many which beset our pilgrims' path.

A glorious pageant in the skies after a while arrested their gaze ; the moon gradually disappeared behind a 'heaven-kissing' hill, and rosy rays, the blushing harbingers of a cloudless morning, shot up to the zenith. They were reflected back by the pure snow on the upper ranges, while beneath all remained cold and grey.

Slow, slow was the progress of our pilgrims over the cumbered earth ; once more the friar beguiled Rosamond's weariness of spirit, by unfolding the rich stores of knowledge which his tenacious memory had enabled him to lay up. He related to her how the wild and lawless clans of these Pisidian highlands had for centuries back been famed for their marauding habits. He told her of Xenophon, and of Alexander the Great, each leading an army through these mountain defiles, called in ancient days the 'rough girdle' of Asia Minor. Then he proceeded to a far dearer theme, and spoke of St. Paul's journeyings in this region, perchance along this very track. It cheered the pilgrim maiden to think of so great a pilgrim having trod this way before her, and her mental eye dwelt on his footprints with mingled awe and delight.*

The sun had risen three hours' journey above the horizon, when Alexios commanded a halt, choosing for this purpose a platform open on all sides, and

* About eight hours' journey from Boudroum, to the south east, is a village still called Paoli, in memory of the Apostle.

tolerably secure from sudden attack ; while the travellers and their beasts partook of food and rest, he employed himself in surveying, from an eminence close at hand, the features of the country. Marcos and others who were familiar with the caravan track, described to him, meanwhile, every turning and winding that lay before them. After intently listening to and comparing these descriptions, the Grand Prince turned to his officers and to Sir Richard : ‘ It seems to me,’ he said, ‘ that our meeting-place with these desperadoes can be none other than the “ Wolf’s Lair,” of which these men speak ; it being hemmed in on three sides by a bend of the river, and on the fourth by a high bank, is the spot where the foe, if so minded, may most easily attack, and *we* most hardly defend ourselves ; it lies, say these men, scarcely a quarter of a league forward, half way ’twixt this our halting place and Fort San Teodoro ; other road or bridle-path there is none, it seems, whereby the fort may be reached ; such being our condition, has any man among you aught fresh to say or to counsel ?’ He looked round upon them with searching glance, wherein the stern resolve of the warrior-king mingled with the intense solicitude of the father.

‘ I say, in Heaven’s name, forward !’ cried the impetuous chamberlain, ‘ and have at them, ere the day be two hours older !’

So said the rest ; and Sir Richard, at a sign from the Komnenos, added his assent, but in more quali-

fied terms : 'I say, Forward ! and God save the right ; but I say also, and that from no base fear, Speed we warily. Our errand is not now to avenge those unhappy and rash Venetians, but to bring this company safe to port, and recover the young hope of Trebizonde from a thralldom worse than death. If these men, albeit infidel cut-throats, are willing for their own ends to make terms with his Grace and with us, Saint George to speed, let us give them a hearing ; if not, let us fight to the death.'

These words, spoken in French, were perfectly understood by none but the Grand Prince ; he signified his approval by pressing Sir Richard's hand as he replied, 'Sir Englishman, your counsel is true and keen as the steel at your side ; help us to bring it to effect when the hour comes.'

The galley-master now approached old Giorgios, haling after him two peasants, whom he had detected sculking in the thicket. They appeared simple harmless men, unarmed, save with the short knife without which no man then went abroad. They were wrapped from the shoulders to below the knees in a sheep-skin cloak, a hood of the same covered their heads and most of their features, leaving only their eyes and a mass of rough hair on lip and chin visible. In his fear of Assassin wiles, the chamberlain caused them to be searched before introducing them to the presence of the prince. This proceeding so heightened their alarm, that they could for a while do nothing but

grovel at his feet, begging for mercy in their own wild patois. The voice of Alexios reassured them ; and when at his command food was brought, they fell upon it with a voracity which showed that hunger mastered fear. This substantial proof of his good will, changed their terrors into gratitude and loquacity, and they eagerly told all they knew respecting the movements of the bandits.

Some of their number had witnessed from afar the first encounter with Gradenigo, in which the bandits had suffered such severe loss ; they had watched these miscreants returning in disorder to their caves high among the hills ; thence they had issued forth that same night, in number seven or eight hundred, and leaving some of their party at the Wolf's Lair in charge of prisoners of mark, had surrounded Fort Gradenigo, surprising its captain and officers in their flowing cups. The havoc had been great, the survivors few ; from the gestures and dark hints of the peasants, our party inferred that Hossein, unwilling to burden himself with captives, had consigned many remorselessly to the safe keeping of the torrent bed. Laden with spoil, his band had returned to the Wolf's Lair on the previous evening ; they were surely lying in ambushment yonder !

‘ And Fort San Teodoro ! what are the garrison about ? ’ suggested one of the officers.

The peasants knew so much as this, that the governor was on the alert, and only waited for reinforcements from Attalia to attack the enemy. On

hearing this, the prince and Sir Richard looked on one another, struck by the same idea. Then Alexios made inquiry from the men, whether there were any sheep-track or by-path amongst the mountains, by which Attalia, or at least the fort, could be reached. They answered that 'there was such a track, and that by the next full moon, it would be thronged with shepherds from the southern plain, leading their flocks to pasture. Now the snow lay deep, deep in many hollows ; *they* would not attempt the journey, no, not they, for a golden besant ! moreover, the outlaws were spread over all that tract, and 'twere better sink chin deep in a snow-drift, than fall into their hands.'

The galley-master scarcely waited the end of this dispiriting harangue to address Alexios. 'Dread Lord,' he said, bending the knee, 'thy servant is a mountaineer by practice, though not by birth, having many times scaled the Tyrolean Alps that reach to heaven ; suffer me, therefore, to attempt this adventure, and bear your Grace's commands to the governor of San Teodoro ; in two hours I will be with him, and in two more, if he be the bold captain men say, he will meet your grace at the Wolf's Lair.'

The prince looked well pleased on the glowing face and active sinewy frame of the speaker. Before replying, however, he communed apart with Sir Richard Fytton and the friar, both of whom testified warmly to the honesty, prudence, and courage of Massimo. Their testimony had its due weight with

the counsellors of Alexios, who urged him, with the single exception of Giorgios, to accept the brave fellow's services. The chamberlain hung sullenly back, jealous that a foreigner from the despised west, should obtain this distinction.

Massimo meanwhile eagerly waited the prince's fiat, and actually clapped his hands when it proved to be a gracious and full consent. His triumph was, however, dashed by the aggrieved chamberlain, who observed in a loud whisper to his neighbour, 'I thought this varlet, who thrusts his service on our liege, had been bound to that of doughty Samos, prince of popinjays !'

Honest Massimo reddened to the temples with shame and anger : 'A plague on't,' he muttered ; 'and so I am ! Oh, that our Marinaccio had an ounce of true blood in his veins, or that I loved him less ! Well, heaven mend all—I must go seek him, where he lies puling on his cushions, and wring from him six hours' leave for this adventure !'

The Komnenos had been no inattentive observer of this scene, and now recalled the galley-master, saying, 'Our errand admits of no delay ; if, therefore, good fellow, thou hast counted the cost, and darest look an Assassin in the face, don this peasant's sheep-skin at once, gird on thy weapons, take a wallet with needful food, and prepare to be gone. Thou, Giorgios,' continued the prince, 'go to Don Marino Sanuto, and pray him (mark me, with fitting courtesy) to lend us, for the common weal, the service of

this henchman. If he resist, bring him to reason, Giorgios, as thy grey hairs should know how ; tell him the man that stickles for his own ends or dignities now, is no true man, but a craven.'

The rebuked chamberlain kissed his master's hand, and departed on his mission. Fear, or innate weakness of mind, wrung an unwilling consent from Marinaccio ; and shortly afterwards the bold galley-master was seen breasting the high hill to their right, with light and free step. The colour of his sheep-skin garb soon rendered him invisible, even to the eye of Tita, who with cries and piercing lamentations, strove to call him back ; not till he was out of sight could she listen to the half-pitying half-upbraiding voice of Rosamond ; then she suffered herself to be led back to the encampment, and sitting down, with her head resting on both hands, exhausted her grief in passionate sobs.

How often it comes to pass that some crisis in our fate is preceded by an interval of calm, deeply and intensely enjoyed—a momentary pause, wherein to gather strength ! The Grand Prince, having dismissed Massimo, and looked to all other matters that needed the master's eye, walked apart with Angelo, and communed of other days. He spoke of the vicissitudes and struggles of his youth, the griefs of his manhood, and that crowning grief, the loss of his child. Next, not without reticence, he asked how Angelo had fared through that long interval ; and his eye gleamed with high sympathy, as he heard of Francis

of Assisi, and his stirring crusade against the corruption of the age. Then, from the outside and crust of things, they pierced to the inner and hidden springs of action ; Angelo, once more guide and counsellor, sounded the depths of that reserved and heroic spirit, wherein, like heaven's own stars reflected in a deep well, shone undimmed faith and truth. Their conversation lasted long : when the friar reluctantly broke it off to return to his flock, (for such the motley company was to him,) the Komnenos sought Irene, and an hour passed swiftly away, beguiled by her companionship, and the caresses of his deaf and dumb boy : at the prayer of the princess, Rosamond Fytton passed the earlier part of that hour with the royal pair, and sang to them the pilgrim lays of her native land ; they, meanwhile, 'sat still, and let sweet music creep about their ears ;' it was a breathing space of leisure, yet of awful expectation, never to be forgotten.

One hill only remained to be traversed by our caravan. A long and toilsome ascent it was, cheered, however, by the warm rays of the mid-day sun ; the crest was gained, and then followed a precipitous descent of some hundred yards, between cliffs that arched and nearly met over their heads. These suddenly opened, and what a view burst upon our pilgrims ! They looked down (to borrow the beautiful expression of a modern explorer of those regions) 'from the rocky steps of the throne of winter, on the rich and verdant plain' of spring, far, far below ; in

the distance was the blue and sheeny sea. Spurs from the mountain range ran down almost to the beach, their sides clothed with trees, and watered by numberless rapid rills. Close at hand were snowy peaks, rising from belts of dark and lorty fir-trees, cascades gushed from clefts in the nearer cliffs, and the fresh wind carried their waters away, and wafted them in spray over the green thickets. The Wolf's Lair was close at hand ; as they approached this dreaded place, Rosamond saw her father's watchfulness redouble ; she marked his eye exploring every bush, and the green thickets of pomegranate and rose-laurel that here and there skirted the path. Her heart beat thick, for there was something peculiarly appalling in the thought of foes, present, ruthless, yet unseen ; they seemed akin to those legions of evil spirits, which mysteriously haunt our path, yet withdraw themselves from fleshly eyes.

That spell was about to be broken ; the track bends round an angle of rock, and once more they are shut in, and the plain and sea of Pamphylia hidden from view. The cliff on their right is broken, dotted with shrubs, and overrun with creeping plants ; the river reappears to their left, swollen and turbid ; a sudden curve in its course brings it exactly in front of them, and here again it is spanned by one of those picturesque bridges, the like of which existed in Strabo's time, and were described by his pen. Many waterfalls add their tribute, both of flood and of sound, to its rushing tide ; indeed one might think

the water-demons were all abroad, and bent on mischief, so deafening is the roar ! There was a halt, and the prince of Trebizonde rode forward to ascertain that the bridge was safe ; he satisfied himself on this point, but apparently some object beyond it excited his suspicions, for he spurred forward, closely followed by the faithful Giorgios and several more. At this moment the discordant note of the ram's horn, used by Carian peasants, woke the echoes ; and in the twinkling of an eye, the crags and bluffs on either side of the river were alive with wild figures, and bristling with pikes and cutlasses. The robbers rose from their hiding-place, a motley but formidable band, diverse in appearance, dress, and weapons, as the nations to which they originally belonged, but from which crime had expelled them ; some boasted of rich faulchions and swords, and wore scarves and other frippery, probably plundered from Fort Gradenigo ; others were as rudely equipped as the poor Yourooks whom they looked down upon, carrying only knives, and poles with nooses at the end, wherewith to snare their prey. All stared fiercely at the pilgrim band, and at the prince, who was now face to face with their leader.

Hossein came forward, surrounded by his guards, mounted on a strong coal-black horse, and wearing a jewelled faulchion at his side. A serpent of gold and enamel was twisted round his cap ; his face looked bland as ever, as though he were bent on

proving how 'one may smile, and smile, and be a villain.' Never had he put on a demeanour and accent more insinuating, when luring Conrad of Tyre to destruction, or weaving those meshes round the Soldan of Egypt, which De Boteler's hand had brushed away. Yet at that moment the crafty Assassin knew himself to be on the brink of ruin, and felt that his utmost coolness and audacity would be requisite to extricate him from it. As we have already hinted, there was a large admixture of Assassins among the Taurian outlaws; these, being advised of Hossein's disgrace with Mel-edîn, had invited him to come among them, and retrieve by his well-known generalship their languishing fortunes. It had suited his views to do so, but he found the task no easy one. The native bandits proved insubordinate, and their former chief, Leo the Carian, had formed a strong party against him. In order to overawe this man, he had framed and carried into effect the attack on Gradenigo; his success in this daring scheme, had won him transient popularity among the majority of the bandits; but Leo and his friends still kept aloof; Hossein more than suspected that some plot was hatching against him, and that vague belief filled him with deep disquiet.

'Whence is it?' said the Assassin chief, bending low as he approached Alexios, 'that the lord of Trebizonde should come to visit his servant in this inhospitable wilderness? His presence is as sunshine after rain.'

‘Thou knowest mine errand, O Hossein,’ replied the Komnenos, recognizing with an abhorrent thrill the man who had blighted his hopes, and those of Trebizonde; ‘I come to seek my son, bearing with me this scroll and this baldric, tokens that he is in thine hand. I bring his ransom, which shall forthwith be counted and weighed in thy presence; this done, give back my child. If I receive him safe and well—’

The father’s voice faltered, as the image of such unutterable joy rose before his mind’s eye.

Hossein mildly replied, ‘He *is* safe and well, dread Prince; wherefore shouldst thou doubt it? wherein should his death profit me? ’Twas not for mine own quarrel, but for that of Ismael my lord, and lord of the mountains, that I troubled thine house. When he died, the quarrel died also. Hadst thou wronged *me*,’ he added, dark fire flashing from his eye, ‘know Prince, I would have died a thousand deaths rather than forego revenge!’

There was no mistaking the sincerity of this declaration.

‘Lead on, then!’ said the Prince. ‘Thou, Giorgios, bid the caravan move forward; then to the rear! quick! for I mark a kind of confusion there! My treasurer,’ Alexios added, addressing the Assassin, ‘will be here anon, bringing ransom, not for my son only, but for such Christian prisoners as may be in thy hand.’

Our camp is not burdened with useless mouths, Sire,' replied Hossein shortly; 'we have but one captive Nazarene here, and he is mine!'

The words, and the scowl which gave them significance, were not lost on the Komnenos. He refrained from comment, mentally resolving that the liberty of that hapless Nazarene, at whatever price, should be his thank-offering for his child's safety.

Hossein now besought the prince to accompany him to a spot fifty yards further, where stood a tent of black goats' hair, prepared for their interview. A small party of Trebizonde bowmen followed. Hossein signed to his retinue to do likewise, frowning as he marked the absence of several of their number. 'Where is Leo the Carian?' he asked, assuming a look of unconcern. 'Go bid him come hither, and pay honour to the Lord of Trebizonde.'

Giorgios meanwhile obeyed his master's injunctions, first shouting 'Forward!' to the leaders of the caravan, then hastening to the rear to restore order there. This proved no easy task, for some of the outlaws, incensed at the prospect of losing such a mine of plunder, had discharged a few chance arrows in the direction of the caravan. No injury had been done, but such a panic was created as Fra Angelo and Sir Richard could scarcely appease. The unwarlike portion of the community had previously shown great unwillingness to advance, but now changed their tactics, and hurried forward in disorderly fashion, regardless of Giorgios, who swore at

them roundly for fools and cowards. None partook of the alarm more largely than our Marinaccio : the galley-master usually played towards him the part of a rugged yet not unloving nurse towards a peevish babe ; but now that Massimo was absent, his fears ran wild, and apprehending more peril in the rearward than in the van, he urged his mule forward in most inglorious haste. The animal, unused to the spur, and resenting it as mules do, kicked out viciously, and so they reached the bridge ; the mule, sensible of his rider's inbecility, here came to a stand, neither budging himself nor suffering Rosamond Fytton, who rode immediately behind, to pass. Some of the caravan, even at that ticklish juncture, could not choose but smile ; and a knot of bandits, who were watching the scene from a knoll over against the bridge, laughed loud and long.

Not so the exasperated Giorgios. 'Fore George of Cappadoce !' he cried, 'are we to be sneered at by these curs, because yon fantastic fool cannot rule his beast ? Take this and this,' he added, addressing his wrathful speech to the refractory animal, and accompanying it with sharp pricks of his lance ; 'and a murrain on thee, say I !'

The mule, now lashed into fury, reared violently, and laid his luckless rider prone on the earth. There Marinaccio lay unregarded, for a far more terrible catastrophe absorbed all who witnessed it. Rosamond's animal, rudely jostled by the other, had slipped backwards over the edge of the bridge, and

together with its precious freight had sunk in the brimming waters.

Sir Richard, engaged in guarding and bringing up the last stragglers of the caravan, heard an outcry, and hastened to render aid. Ere he could reach the bridge, his child had risen to the surface once ; the current had carried her down a considerable way, for enveloped in the folds of her cloak, she had sunk deep. Now she reappeared partially, her hair floating, and hands outspread ; she seemed to hear the shouts of the spectators, many of whom ran wildly along either bank ; she had sufficient consciousness left to unclasp her mantle, and so leave her arms free ; but of what avail was that ? The naked rock at that place rose fifteen feet at least, perpendicularly, on either side of the river, its waters whirled and eddied like a mill-race ; the strongest swimmer could not have kept his head above them for more than a few minutes ; what hope then for a helpless girl ? The grey-haired Giorgios, horror-struck at the consequence of his own folly, thought not of risks and impossibilities, but plunged into the stream. Alas ! he rose no more, cramped by the intense cold of the melted snows. His fate deterred others from the rash attempt, and Sir Richard, who in the madness of his grief would have breasted Styx itself, was forcibly held back. Alexios had rushed to his side.

‘Play the man, Sir Knight,’ he said in a voice hoarse from feeling, ‘and come along with me. See,

the stream turns sharply yonder, and the cliffs that wall it in show less steep; we may recover her there.

That hope nerved the distracted father, and with the vigour and celerity of younger years, he hurried over crag and stone to the spot indicated; there the river rolled round the cliff, broader and smoother on the surface, but not a whit less rapid or strong; a few yards further (oh, horror!) it reached the brow of the cliff, and leaped sheer down the mountain side at one bound. Despair for a moment froze the father's blood: but he revived when he saw Alexios and others fasten a rope round bold Marcos, and lower him to a projecting crag which touched the water's edge.

All eyes were now fixed on the flood that swept round the angle of the rock. The shadow in which it lay was dark and deep, but a white glimmer like a wreath of foam was seen upon it. Soon Rosamond's form could be distinguished, no longer at the mercy of the waters, but high upborne by a man's powerful arm. From the shouts and confused voices of the lookers on, it appeared that her upholder was no member of the caravan, but a stranger, a bandit most likely, who, lurking in a fissure of the cliff, had seen the maiden fall, and perilled life in her behalf. He struggled on, sometimes shouting for help, at others speaking in cheering tones to the half unconscious girl. His strength however seemed waning, and he looked from side to side for something to clutch at,

but in vain. As soon as he came within reach, Marcos threw him one end of the rope attached to his own body. He saw and strove to grasp at it, but the benumbed fingers refused to close, and it slipped through. Marcos next plunged into the water, and struck out in pursuit, but a strong eddy caught and almost overwhelmed him. Sir Richard seeing this, rushed forward; but the prince, who had already thrown off his outer garment, put him aside, then sped along the river's brink for a few yards, till he reached the spot where it prepared for its leap into the plain. Here stooping down, Alexios saw with unspeakable satisfaction a strong young oak that had struck its roots into some crevice of the rock, and shot its main branch horizontally across the stream. In far less time than is required to chronicle the act, he had reached that branch, and let himself down into the stream, still retaining firm hold of the friendly tree. He extended his right hand to the stranger, crying out, 'Keep up, stout heart; keep up! good! Now lay her on mine arm!'

The bold swimmer, though much exhausted, heard those animating words, and resigned his drooping charge to Alexios' hold. The prince placed Rosamond on a broad ledge of rock which the oak overshadowed. The quivering of her whole frame, and the inarticulate murmurs which broke from her lips, reassured him on her account.

'Now, brother, thy hand!' the prince exclaimed, turning to the maiden's deliverer. 'One struggle

more, and the pit yawns for thee in vain ! Kind heart ! wert thou thrice a bandit, I must love thee !

‘No bandit I!’ said the young stranger, raising his pale, but most expressive face to Alexios. The next moment he had flung himself down by Rosamond, as though the wide world contained no other being ; laying her head on his breast, he chafed her hands between both his, and called upon her in accents of passionate entreaty to speak to him. ‘Is it thus we meet, darling ? thus, thus, after long years ! Shall those dear eyes, the blue and cloudless heaven of my affections, beam on me one moment, then leave me darkling for ever ? Ah no, they unclothe ! they seek out mine ! the warm blood-mantles in her cheek ; she lives and loves me yet !’

That impassioned cry, the burning tears that accompanied it, falling thick and fast on her brow, restored Rosamond to consciousness, yet not full consciousness ; that was mercifully delayed, lest the poor heart should break under its weight of bliss. She lay still, perusing every line and feature of his face, earnestly, almost wistfully ; then as ‘the past came o’er her,’ quick blushes overspread her own, and she raised herself and sat erect, though trembling.

De Boteler, impetuous still, and taught mistrust by the world’s contumely, misjudged that silence and those blushes. He drew back, pale and rigid, and his arms fell by his side. Bitterly he called to mind the dark passages of his former life,

the momentary madness, and the stain of blood, and the Church's ban ! 'Fool,' he muttered, striking his forehead with his hand, 'to dream I could be other than an outcast from her love ! Oh, the more angel she, the more lost I !'

'Now unsay that word, thou foolish Gawyne !' pleaded the voice, soft, gentle, and low, which from his boyhood had had power to soothe. He turned, and all misgiving vanished. One long fervent kiss was followed by silence, 'perfectest herald of joy.' Then he rose exulting ; she was his ; she had been his without break or pause through that dark blank waste of years. What could part them now ?

CHAPTER XVII.

‘The end crowns all.’—*Shakespeare.*

GAWYNE and Rosamond may be pardoned if for a brief moment they lingered absorbed in their own bliss. Sounds of wonder and gratulation recalled them to the outer world, and they looked round for their preserver, but Alexios was gone. Sir Richard, however, was at hand, and Rosamond in speechless ecstasy saw De Boteler clasped to his heart; ‘fond, foolish tears,’ as the knight termed them, rained down his withered cheeks, while he blessed Gawyne for his child’s deliverance.

Supported by these two beloved ones, the maiden slowly regained the camp. Many were the kindly welcomes back to life which she received; many were the wondering glances raised towards that slight martial stranger at her side, whose chesnut curls and quick blue eye proclaimed his northern origin. Tita, in her joy at seeing her young mistress safe, forgot the galley-master for a moment; even Marino who, flouted by all for his part in the misadventure, had hidden himself, came forth, and fell at Rosamond’s feet, sobbing; ‘I deemed thee dead, Madonna, and

through me !' he said brokenly. ' Now shall Saint Nicholas of Myra be right welcome to my house and pleasaunce of Chanli, for a thank-offering for thy safety and my own ! Yes, mine ! *maffè*, I was on the point of leaping after thee, but then I remembered myself to be no expert swimmer, neither web-footed like the ducks on Lake Ascania, and the river ran swiftly, nothing like our canals in Venice ; and so I forbore—*Cospetto*, 'twas well I did ! I might have fared as ill as the testy fool Giorgios !'

'Peace, babbler,' interposed Sir Richard ; 'here comes her Grace.' The Lady Irene now met them, and with her Fra Angelo, whose low but earnest benediction calmed Rosamond's fluttered spirits ; the princess greeted her tenderly, then turning to De Boteler bade him welcome in her husband's name. 'The Komnenos,' she added, believing him to be the Christian captive of whom Hossein had spoken, prayed him to tarry in the camp till his freedom had been treated for.' She then with gentle compulsion carried off the maiden to a fire new lit ; there she chafed her feet, wrapped her in warm garments, and would have had her lie down and rest ; but Rosamond affirmed there was no need of that, for she ailed nothing, no, not so much as a finger ache !

In truth, the royal lady was now far more an object of solicitude ; her habitual calmness began to give way under the pressure of suspense, and mounting her palfrey, she rode forward, well attended, to the side of her husband. The procession had crossed

the bridge, and extended its long and snake-like line as far as Hossein's tent, the place appointed for negociation. Alexios and his train were already there ; Rosamond, moved by the beseeching glance of Irene's eye, followed her closely, though her heart and mind were with De Boteler and Sir Richard, now deep in conference. Sir Richard, at the request of his adopted son, supplied him with such armour as he could command, and with weapons good and keen ; meanwhile he rapidly enlightened him as to the position of the caravan, its numbers, his hope of succours from Attalia, and lastly, the object of the Grand Prince in thus seeking out Hossein the Poisoner. Gawyne listened with intense interest to each of these particulars ; and his eye gleamed with joy as he exclaimed, ' My Bulbul, my brother ! how does it glad my heart to know thee thus nobly fathered ! '

There was no time, however, to dwell on any subject, save the danger they were now exposed to, and the means of averting it. That danger none could estimate better than Gawyne ; he in few words told of his dismal captivity, and of Hossein's inveterate hatred against himself ; then he related how the bandit Leo, jealous of Hossein's pre-eminence, had sought him out, and, with the Jew chemist's aid, set him free. He touched upon the savage and unbounded license that prevailed among those wretches, but broke off abruptly, saying, ' O father, counsel yonder noble prince to trust them not an

inch ; see, I pray you, that all are on their guard, and let your hand be on your sword hilt continually ; when I think of our Rose of snow amongst these fiends, my brain is on fire !'

It was deemed most for the general safety, that De Boteler should not obtrude himself into Hossein's presence ; he therefore mingled with the Trebizonde warriors behind the royal suite, unrecognized except by his Rosamond ; her eye beamed with happy light when from time to time it met his.

Soon, however, all eyes were riveted on the group assembled within the tent ; its curtains were unclosed, and the treasurer of Trebizonde was visible, counting out pieces of gold, while a selected number of Assassins, under Hossein's eye, weighed them. The Grand Prince stood leaning on his sword, silently and sternly regarding the scene. When the last besant had been examined and approved, he advanced, the rigidity passing from his features as snows from a high hill in summer : 'The ransom is thine, O Hossein ; give me my son.'

'Thy demand is just, dread Prince,' replied the Crooked Serpent ; 'the fair boy is no farther removed than yon cave in the cliff side ; ho ! you without there, bid Leo the Carian bring him hither.'

'Leo the Carian is not here,' answered a native bandit, regarding his chief with a smile of doubtful meaning. 'He went forth at noon, and not alone.'

'Ha ! not returned yet ?' exclaimed Hossein ; 'Whither went he, dog ? speak, for thou knowest.'

‘How should I know?’ retorted the other, with the mien, as well as in the words, of Cain—‘Am I his keeper?’

The prince now interfered; ‘This paltering is not to be borne,’ he said; ‘we will on, and meet my son!’ He mounted, and was about to proceed, when one of Hossein’s retinue came running breathlessly; he spoke in Hossein’s ear; ‘There is treachery, O Captain; Leo is fled, and the Nazarene escaped; Dimitri swears he saw him swim the flood, and land amid his brother Franks yonder.’

‘The Nazarene escaped!’ repeated Hossein, every muscle of his countenance starting forth. ‘Gone! and my revenge gone with him! *escaped*, saidst thou?’

No one made answer, and all stood still, marking the fearful working of the worst passions in that bad man’s breast; they mastered him for a while, but he composed himself, and signing to his followers to close round, rode up to the prince; ‘This Nazarene, O Alexios,’ he said, ‘hath sought refuge in thy camp; he is mine, the captive of my bow and spear; command, therefore, that he be given up to me! this done, we will let thy son go free!’

The Komnenos did not at once reply; he glanced upwards to the hills (from whence cometh our help), then down on Hossein with infinite and beautiful scorn; so looked Saint Michael on the dragon, as he trode him under foot. ‘To thee!’ he said; ‘give up a Christian soul to thee? Now, God forbid I should do this thing!’

Hossein answered with a sneer, 'It is well, O faithful Prince, well and doubtless wisely spoken ; but know, that except this Frank be restored this hour, thou shalt see thy son no more.'

A faint cry, the voice of the mother in uncontrollable agony, was heard ; Alexios became as pale as death ; 'We will try the issue of arms,' he said ; 'and God judge betwixt thee and me.'

At the beginning of this conference, De Boteler had drawn nearer in order to lose no word of it ; he was now at Rosamond's side, with his hand on her bridle rein ; he watched her eye narrowly, and saw disquietude, dread, horror, alternately pictured there ; no need of word from him, to prepare her for his part in this dark tragedy.

'Rosamond,' he said rapidly and in a deep hollow voice, 'thou art a holy pilgrim ; I a rude rough soldier, yet weak as chrysome child at this pinch ; bid me go, darling, bid me leave thee ; say it is God's will, therefore thine.'

The reins fell from Rosamond's grasp, and she wrung her hands in silence. A darkness spread itself before her sight, and a great trembling over her whole frame ; she turned away, flinging out both hands like one that thrusts aside a bitter cup.

Gawyne's eyes fastened upon her with a look of agony. 'Rosamond,' he said again, and this time she turned full upon him her wan and convulsed features ; 'One word, darling, say one word, save *these* from massacre, me from shamed life !' She strove

breathlessly to catch the tones of the dear voice, then slowly stooped till her lips touched his cold brow; an inarticulate murmur past them, one word, no more, heard and interpreted by him alone—was it ‘go?’

‘My own true wife!’ he answered; and committing her by a silent gesture to her father’s care, he sped forth to execute his high purpose. It was born and matured in one instant of agonized thought; to surrender himself to the loathed Hossein, and thus save bloodshed, and shield the women and unwarlike members of the caravan from frightful risk, was his first resolution; his next, to bear, as Christian soldier should, whatever Hossein might inflict, choosing rather to perish from want, than taste of the intoxicating drink of the Assassins, or ‘eat of such things as pleased them!’

So minded, De Boteler lost no time in accosting the Grand Komnenos. ‘Dread Prince,’ he said, bending the knee, ‘grant to a stranger, who owes much to your kingly grace, one grace more. I am fully resolved to return to my captivity; but first, I do conjure your highness tarry not here; for the royal lady’s sake, for the sake of yonder helpless ones, take your son and begone! Your force counts scarce two hundred strong; Hossein has at his beck six hundred, not men, but devils; the odds are desperate; pass on, therefore, and set our wives in safety; then turn back and avenge me!’ He shook off almost roughly the prince’s detaining hand, but recol-

lecting himself, paused, and ungirded his sword : ' This for Sir Richard Fytton,' he said ; ' and for thy kingly child, my fealty and deep love ; farewell.'

De Boteler hastened on, without one backward look. He resolvedly put away the noble-hearted friar who joined him, ready, nay, eager to share his perils and martyrdom. ' Return, father ; the battle must be fought alone ; rather it *was* fought when I looked my last in her dear face ; go comfort her, and be our intercessor with the Most High.'

Hossein received back his prisoner with an inward sense of triumph, which prudence taught him to repress in the presence of the ' faithful king.' He was impatient to conclude his business with Alexios as quickly as possible, so as to be free to check the progress of insubordination in his force. It was now collected in sight on the eminence which overlooked the track : Leo the Carian was not there, and a rapid glance convinced Hossein that ninety or a hundred of his confederates had deserted with him. They were indeed but a sixth of the outlaw band ; but aided by Venetian succours, they might, if not pursued and vanquished at once, work him much evil. Symptoms of sullenness showed themselves amongst the Carians whom Leo had left behind ; and to crown his suspicions, his despised, but not useless tool, Manasses the Jew, was found to have absconded in the night.

It was, therefore, with a restless and troubled mien that Hossein watched the disarming and binding

of his victim. He committed him to the keeping of a score of Assassins, men of training and temper akin to his own. 'Ismael,' said he to their chief, 'thy life shall answer for this man's ; if an affray arise, and thou see me worsted, hasten with him to the creek where lies our carrack, and wait my coming there. Now, mark me well ; if thou see me fall, ay, fall, hurt unto death, stab him at once with thine own hand ; do it quickly, that our souls may journey together to the dark shore.'

During this short interval, the sad and thoughtful king beckoned his officers and Sir Richard Fytton to him ; he thus addressed the latter in the hearing of all : 'Sir Knight, I dare not, for our helpless ones' sake, neglect the bidding of yon true heart ; we must push on, so soon as our child is restored ; yet a bow-shot or two, and these rocks, which shut us in shall cease, and the danger of surprise cease with them ; at that point I am resolved to turn, and with His help who saves by many or by few, pursue these Assassins, and win back our hostage ; a small but prudent escort will suffice, meanwhile, to place our women under the protection of San Teodoro.' The prince paused, and looked round him ; stern approval lighted up the features of his own warriors at this announcement, while Sir Richard's furrowed face glowed with thankfulness. He kissed in silence the hand held out to him by Alexios, who thus briefly closed his address ; 'Thus much, my hearts, for your satisfaction, and for the satisfaction of this noble

pilgrim, whose life seems bound up in the youth's life : the rest we will order presently ; now forward !

As he spoke the last words, the Komnenos touched his horse with the spur, and rode forward on a line with Hossein. The cliff, whose stony breast held his long lost son, rose majestically before him, projecting like a vast grey buttress into the level space now occupied by the pilgrims. The track, which both in the ascent and descent of the Taurian hills generally presented a series of zigzags, here turned at an acute angle, following the bend of the rock. They now saw the mouth of the cave at their left hand, guarded by a party of bandits and strewn about with great fragments of rock. Between these lay patches of close turf, gemmed with dwarf iris and the golden crocus. The cave faced southward and its entrance commanded a magnificent view. The Pamphylian plain, the green lowlands and sparkling sea, once more burst on our pilgrims' sight, and were hailed by them with joyous acclamations.

Some there were amongst their number by whom at this moment, the gorgeous scenery, the nearness of their journey's end, nay, the possible approach of succour were unthought of ; Rosamond, forcibly held back from flying to Gawyne's side, had for the first time rebelled against her father's will, and struggled wildly in his tender but determined grasp. That paroxysm of despair, the natural effect of so sudden a plunge from bliss to woe, wore itself out, and gentler though still disordered thoughts took pos-

session of her brain. The childlike love and trust that lay deep at her heart's core, rose up, and saved the life-strings of that gentle heart from breaking. She caught a glimpse of her father's face, convulsed with grief, as he bent over her, and amid the chaos of her thoughts, a confused remembrance of having resisted his will came upon her. It dyed her cheek and brow crimson, and forced from her lips so wild and piteous a cry for forgiveness, as quite unmanned those that heard it. The knight, almost beside himself, could but hush and soothe her, whispering in her ear over and over again, 'Patience, my child ; we will turn anon and avenge him.'

While he thus calmed her distraction, and while Irene the Fair sat, statue-like, awaiting the fearful blissful moment of reunion, the Assassin leader dismounted in order to enter the cavern. The first impulse of Alexios was to enter along with him, but his officers with earnest remonstrances dissuaded him from so rash and useless a venture. Hossein scowled upon them as he marked their distrust ; then composing his countenance, said, 'They say well, dread Prince ; they say well ; the boy is tender-spirited, and might faint under the burden of greatness, if too suddenly thrust upon him.' 'Arch-hypocrite,' the Grand Prince was about to say, but repressing his ire, he only replied by an expressive movement of his hand towards the cave's mouth. The last drop of that patience, which had sustained his soul through years of suffering, seemed now ebbing away.

Wait awhile, faithful Alexios ; the fair spray, whose earliest blossoms gladdened thy palmy days, shall be restored to thee ; not withered and dwarfed, as thy trembling heart suggests, but graceful and strong, fit staff for thy declining years. Wait one brief hour ; the draught of joy would taste less pure and sweet, if brought to thy lips by the ministry of such an one as Hossein.

We have said already, that from this Taurian platform the green and ever-shifting Mediterranean is plainly visible. When, as now, a south wind blows, its bell-like sounds ascend to the high ground in most melodious chime. Two tracks meet here ; one from Attalia, one from the highest accessible point of the mountain range. Both seemed solitary and silent a few moments since ; both now ring with the tread of armed men. From the south come a band of gallant marksmen, with the Commandant of San Teodoro at their head, and the galley-master by voice and gesture urging them on. No need, however, to urge them ; for they breast the steep ascent with even, regular tramp, fired by all the zeal which love of enterprise and thirst for retaliation can inspire. First, their waving plumes, then their dark faces protected by iron or leathern caps, then their gleaming weapons, rise to sight ; and as they reach the top of the ridge, and face the cliff, they greet their enemies with shouts of ‘ Vengeance ! ’ ‘ Gradenigo ! ’

Nor is this all. The higher tract, still in places besprent with glittering snow, is covered with a com-

pact body of armed bandits. Leo and his mutineers come forth from the screen of pine-trees which had concealed their approach ; the muffled sound of their footsteps is scarcely heard as they descend at a quick shuffling run over the layers of fir needles, which for centuries have accumulated there. They are diversely clad, in sheep or wolf or bear skins ; many of them, like their Herculean leader, carry truncheons as well as small arms. At sight of them, their confederates, the gallant and point-device warriors of Venice, utter a shout of greeting.

Who can paint the wild scene that ensued ? In a well-ordered and long-foreseen battle, the very actors can frequently give no certain account of the incidents which mark its progress, or hasten its issue ; how much harder the chronicler's task, who attempts to describe this sudden but desperate conflict ? Hossein, seeing the foe upon him, blew a low blast which brought forth from within the cave a party of his followers. These gathered round him, encircling also the Grand Komnenos and his small knot of officers. Having thus, as he thought, made the safety of the prince dependent on his own, the Assassin leader mounted his horse, and in a thin and tremulous but distinct voice, demanded of the Venetians a parley. The effrontery of the request produced a momentary hush, and men looked on each other ; but a solitary voice from the rear of the Venetians, cried, ' Remember Gradenigo ! ' and in an instant every tongue was loosed. ' No parley ! ' ' No

surrender !' resounded on all sides, and a flight of arrows, aimed with great precision at the outlaws, drew the first blood shed in that fray.

It thickens amain ; for see, the Trebizonde bowmen, who, like their king, had fretted and chafed in enforced inaction, for once break through their wonted discipline ; those in the rear throw down their bows, seize their poniards, and rushed by one consent on De Boteler's guard ; they cut down Ismael its captain, and after a fierce struggle, kill, wound, or disperse the rest. Gawyne is set free, and the feat proclaimed to friend and foe by a hurrah that makes the hills ring.

Thus all thoughts of neutrality are done away with, and Hossein and his five hundred encounter a number of Venetians, mutineers, and men of Trebizonde, almost equal to their own. But the advantage is on Hossein's side ; for his followers are united, desperate, and unencumbered by women or baggage. Moreover, they have surrounded the faithful king, and press him hard, thrusting at him with such effect, that the crimson blood derived from martyred ancestors stains his face and his raiment. His retinue, together with the Cheshire knight, keep close around him, and strive to parry the more deadly blows aimed at his head or breast. So aided, he holds his ground, and cries aloud to those engaged in a more desultory struggle without the ring, ' Friends, see to the women ! In Heaven's name, rescue them !'

Animated by this appeal, Angelo, the most defenceless and weaponless of that company, took his life in his hand, and went forth. It was high time, for the appointed guards of the caravan were dispersed, the queen's own henchmen attacked, and shrieks of terror rose from the unprotected women huddled together amidst mules and baggage. To bestow them safely within the cave, was the friar's object ; by his calm reassuring demeanour, by using persuasion with some, and, like Lot's angel, taking others by the hand, he accomplished this.

Marcos and three men had, meanwhile, explored the cavern, and dragged forth two of Hossein's creatures left to guard the captive prince. Freed from their insolent coercion, the boy sprang up and ran to the vaulted entrance, much marvelling what new sounds rang in his ear. Here he met and found himself clasped in the embrace of the trembling Irene ; eager rapturous voices hailed him as their prince, knees were bent to him, and loyal kisses printed on his passive hands. But he neither saw nor heeded them ; his eyes were fixed on that pale and exquisitely lovely face that bent over him, ever and anon pressing her cheek against his in speechless ecstasy of love. But for that touch, and the pressure of the soft arms twined round him, he would have deemed her a heavenly vision—perhaps his guardian angel (for of such beings he had heard Gawayne speak ;) if an angel, one he had surely seen before ! Yes, long ago he had seen that face, heard the soft

whispered word, 'darling,' that now thrilled through every nerve. It awoke in his memory an answering chord; burying his face on her breast, he sobbed forth in doubtful, half-fearful accents, 'Mother! She, and none else, heard the sound. 'It is enough,' she murmured; 'Manuel my son, is yet alive.'

So the rapturous moments sped away; and Manuel, with pitying tenderness, received and amply returned the caresses of his hapless brother. But now the spirit of the Komnenos began to stir within him; hearing the trumpet blast and the battle cry, he unwound his mother's arm from round his neck, and asked in princely wise what it meant. Marcos, much rejoicing to see his eye kindle and cheek glow, told him what was happening without, and how his father and the chivalry of Trebizonde were fighting for their lives. No need of more; he had caught up weapons in an instant, and promising his mother to return anon, had rushed with Marcos into the fray. The sight of De Boteler fighting gallantly, wrought up the boy's enthusiasm to a yet higher pitch, and he made his way to him, and remained at his side till the sun's disk nearly touched the sea. Little indeed could the frail arm do, and but for the watchful care of his Gawyne, that little might have been his last; but the courage which afterwards won him the appellation of 'Great Captain,' flashed nobly forth, and his father marked it and thanked God. Perhaps the proudest moment of either Alexios' or

Manuel's life, was that in which (the battle having ceased) the father kissed his child's fair brow, and bade the nobles of Trebizonde do homage to their prince.

It was at sunset that victory declared for the Christians. Hossein fought on, rendered invulnerable by a cunningly constructed suit of light chain armour, which his loose leathern tunic concealed. Now, pushed to extremity, he fought his way up the mountain, up, up, like a wild beast at bay, the Venetians pursuing him closely. At the top of the cliff he turned and glared around him, seeking some way of escape ; but there was none ; and the mingled cries of 'Gradenigo !' and 'Vengeance !' which beset his ears, showed that he had no mercy to expect. Then, impelled by the cowardice of despair, he shook his red right hand at the enemy, leaped over the precipice and perished. At his death, all resistance ceased ; indeed, so severe were the losses of the bandits, and so great was their discouragement, that for many years after, caravans travelled that way in peace.

There were not a few dead to be buried, and wounded men to be cared for. Amongst the former was Leo the Carian, whom a stone, slung by Hossein himself, had laid prone on the earth. Amongst the latter, the Sanuto presented himself, having, as he observed, 'been galled not a little by an enemy's lance in the nape of the neck.' Of this wound he continued to boast till his dying day, none venturing

to doubt the veracity of the boast, except the galley-master. He, in an unguarded moment, afterwards confided to his pretty bride, Tita, that that slight prick had been inflicted by himself, in the vain hope of urging their master on to do and dare something on the battle-field ! ‘But,’ continued Massimo despondingly, ‘for all he had drunk so much sack he hath nought but melted snow in his veins !’

Here we take leave of our Marinaccio, as he, after that eventful day, did of all martial or pilgrim adventure. The scenes then witnessed by him, confirmed him in the belief of his favourite axiom, that ‘safety is better than glory,’ ‘and to quaff the blood of the grape, more profitable than to shed the blood of man.’ He seized the first opportunity of returning by sea to Samos. There he lived in ignoble ease ; and there he died, at no advanced age ; for when did the basely self-indulgent, or the wine-bibber, ever ‘live out half their days ?’ The people of Samos shed some tears over his inglorious grave ; they were, in truth, his debtors, inasmuch as he had bestowed upon them a negative benefit, in transferring them to the vigorous and beneficent sway of Agnolo Sanuto. This nobleman governed the Cyclades for many years, and laid the foundation of a dynasty which flourished there for upwards of four centuries and a half.

It is evening, warm, still, and balmy. The wounded have been cared for, the dead hastily laid in a bloody grave. The tremblers within the cave

(for all *have* trembled, either for themselves or others) have come forth. Slowly they wind down the mountain track, through clumps of walnut, oak, and plane, thickets of blossoming almond, and tracts covered with sweet blue violets. Winter is left behind in the dark Taurian gorges ; and it seems as if by one consent all bitter remembrances, all horrible associations, all regrets, save such as enhance present bliss, were left there too. Alexios forgets his wounds, and Irene her recent anguish, while gazing on their new-found treasure. They joy in his beauty and courage, and yet more in his innocence, love, and truth. In the glowing language of the East, they thank De Boteler for his care of the ' Bulbul,' henceforth to be known by that name no more ; nor do they confine themselves to words alone ; fain would they have detained him near the throne of Trebizonde, and heaped upon him all the distinctions most coveted by its knighthood. These, however, De Boteler firmly declined ; he pointed to the silver-hilted dagger, long since given him by the Bulbul, and with glowing fervour, vowed that nothing but death should part him from that, and from the dear remembrance of the giver ; ' of further token,' quoth he, ' there is no need.'

Deeply did Fra Angelo share the happiness of his recovered friends. And if sometimes he appeared silent and meditative, it was from no tinge of gloom or asceticism. From the contemplation of joy around him, he withdraws into the sanctuary of his

own heart ; abiding joy dwells there, the portion of those who, having renounced all, 'attend upon the Lord without distraction.'

And Rosamond ? She too is silent, wearied out by the changeful events of the day ; but it is the silence of a heart running over with thankful still delight. Gawyne leads her gently down the steep, cheering her the while with word and look and bright anticipation ; and this his care is but an earnest of the life-long devotion, with which her love and truth shall be repaid. So they wend their way, till the rich plain is reached, and wheat and barley, with their tenderest green, and orchards of mulberry, lemon, and fragrant orange, greet the eye. There, with a start of sweet surprise, our Cheshire pilgrims suddenly hear the dear home-like note of the cuckoo. That 'wandering voice' fills Rosamond's eyes with tears, recalling childish days, and rural life in merrie England, and the hay-harvest in Dame Mary's green meadows, and Dame Mary's graceful self diffusing peace around. Gawyne's thought meets hers, and he pauses to whisper, 'Oh that our dearest mother were with us, sweet heart, to bless us now !' And Rosamond answered, 'She is with us, my Gawyne ; she does bless us ; and we will so live and love, that she shall bless us to the end.'

We draw to the end of our narrative, and will not linger, lest it pall on the ear of those whom we desire to please. When recovered from his wounds, the Grand Komnenos, accompanied by Irene and his two

sons, made a 'pilgrimage of thanks' to the coast of Palestine. After short tarriance there, he returned with them to his principedom of Trebizonde. He died a year and a half later, in 1222, leaving behind him a great and untarnished name. His elder son, Joannes, did not long survive him. After some struggle with his ambitious kinsman, Andronicos Ghidos, Manuel succeeded to the throne of Trebizonde. By his bold spirit and great capacity, both for war and for domestic government, he raised his dominions to a high pitch of glory and prosperity. His effigy may still be seen at Trebizonde, in the cathedral church, dedicated to the 'Eternal Wisdom.' It represents him clad in flowing robes, of which the border is enriched with medallions, bearing single-headed eagles, the device of Trebizonde. A medallion of larger dimensions serves as clasp; therein, on a ground of blue, is engraved the figure of St. Eugenios, not as in the days of Alexios the Faithful, represented on foot, grasping a pastoral staff, but proudly mounted on horseback, a warrior saint.

Angelo and his beloved pupils parted at Acre. 'Farewell, my father,' said Alexios, much moved. 'Thou knowest the proverb of our country—"Mountains cannot meet, but men may;" let me then foster the hope that we shall meet again.'

They have met again, but not on earth. A far other sphere of action was reserved for the holy Minorite; in 1221, he was sent to England as first general of his order, already extending widely

throughout our isle. He is still remembered for his meekness (which procured him the name of Agnello), and for the reforms which he introduced and zealously maintained, in the school of theology, in Oxford. 'He lived to a good old age, opposed by some, but honoured and admired by more.

Francesco d'Assisi died in his native place, and near his loved shrine of Porzioncula, in 1226 ; he was in his forty-sixth year. We are all familiar with the words in which he commended his worn and weary spirit to its Creator ; 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto Thy Name.' But none, save those who have earnestly studied the record of his life, its labours and sufferings, its moments of child-like gladness, its days of dark melancholy, can understand how truly this miserable and naughty world was a prison house to him. He rests in a chapel of exquisite beauty at Assisi, and near him lies his disciple and enthusiastic lover, the veteran king, John de Brienne.

One of the most remarkable institutions ever devised by human wisdom, was the Third or Secular order of Minorites, founded in 1221 (if not earlier), by Francis of Assisi. It comprehended married persons, enjoined no vows, laid down no rules, save the 'restitution of unjust gains, forgiveness of enemies, and obedience to God.' Its members wore a simple and uniform dress, abstained from theatres, feasts, and luxury ; but otherwise were in no way restricted from consulting the proprieties of their

social rank ; they were to be found in the market-place, the universities, the tribunals, even on the throne. Nobles and peasants, men and women, young and old, soldiers and statesmen, joined their ranks with ardent devotion. Gawyne (long since reconciled to the Church) and Rosamond did so at once ; and to Gawyne's impetuous spirit, this gentle yet ever-present restriction proved most salutary. He learnt to love it from the highest and purest motives ; and loved it not the less because it daily brought before him the image of Francesco, his most venerated friend, the heaven-sent deliverer of his soul in its deepest need.

Sir Richard Fytton and De Boteler left Rosamond at Acre, under the protection of the Countess Clemence, whose joy at beholding her again was sincere and overflowing. They repaired at once to Damietta, of which the siege was protracted till the November of that year, 1220. It fell at length, after repeated assaults, in which our Gawyne (now dubbed Sir Gawyne De Boteler by stout Earl Randle), won a rich harvest of renown. He then returned with the earl to Acre, and there claimed and received the hand of Rosamond Fytton.

Of Mel-edîn, the generous but irresolute Soldan of Egypt, we read in history, that in his latter days, he 'showed strong inclinations to Christianitie, wearie of Mahometanisme, and willing to break that prison, but for watchful gaolers about him ;' when a small body of the Christian host rashly attacked Cairo in

1221, and were taken prisoners, Mel-edîn 'of his princely goodnesse furnished them with victuals,' and sent them away in peace. In these traits, we trace a remembrance of the bold and impressive teaching of Francis of Assisi.

Sir Richard Fytton sailed for England with Earl Randle, and shortly after became Grand Justiciary of the County Palatine. He did not forget his vow registered in Samos, but duly made over a portion of his estates in Fulshawe and Fallingbrome to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem; after his return from Damietta, he lived in all honour among his own dependants for five-and-twenty years, and died in 1246.

Sir Gawyne, true to his vow, remained in the East as long as there was any opening for crusading zeal. But in a year or two, the war with Syria and Egypt died out; then, weary of inaction, and disgusted with the quarrels and selfishness which disgraced that holy cause, he gladly returned with his lovely and beloved wife to England. Thus ended the pilgrimage of Gawyne and Rosamond De Boteler; but they never forgot that they were 'pilgrims and strangers' on earth; nor was present bliss a whit less vividly enjoyed, because they daily looked with firmer trust and brightening hope to a 'better country, that is, a heavenly.'

HUGH ROBERTS, PRINTER,
CHESTER.



